

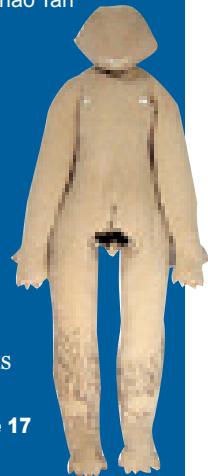
北京青年报

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CHIEF EDITOR:
JIAN RONG
NEWS EDITOR:
HOU MINGXIN
DESIGNER:
Zhao Yan



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BEIJING YOUTH DAILY



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Bush Sr a charity night star

This Wednesday, former US president George H Bush attended Chinese Charity Night, one of the largest events of its kind. Also present were top Chinese actors and businessmen, but Bush and wife Barbara were the stars of the night. Page 8

Photo by Tian Yufeng

Former Beijing
deputy mayor
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Pavillion

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Half a million dogs get rabies vaccination

By Chu Meng

Beijing's extensive dog vaccination program seems to pay off. As of November 15, there has been only one reported case of rabies this year among Beijing residents.

The rabies victim was bitten by a dog, which was brought to the city from elsewhere, said the Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau.

The eleven other reported rabies cases involved non-Beijing residents.

jingers who came to seek medical help in the city.

Vaccination for people and pets

By mid-November, up to 118,000 city residents had received anti-rabies inoculations after being bitten or scratched by cats or dogs. This number was up 22 percent compared to the previous year, said the bureau.

The dogs have also been vaccinated. "All the 550,323 registered dogs in Beijing have received

anti-rabies inoculations. Three hundred and nineteen anti-rabies inoculation stations had been opened in the capital to offer free inoculations for all registered dogs. Beijing has also set up 45 anti-rabies clinics to provide 24-hour medical assistance to those bitten by dogs," Liu Yaqing, vice director of the bureau, said.

However, there are a further 500,000 unregistered dogs roaming the city, and authorities have no way of knowing whether they

have received anti-rabies shots.

Dog adoption

The Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau has also put up dogs for adoption beginning last Monday. "This first dog-adoption day found homes for more than 40 healthy puppies, plus two hundred other potential adopters had already phoned in," said Huang Zhimin, director of the bureau's dog-raising administration department.

The dog pound is open to the public every Tuesday and Friday. Anyone who wants to adopt will receive instruction on how to raise a dog, and live harmoniously with neighbors. The department has about 600 stray or confiscated dogs, but only healthy ones which are less than 35cm tall can be adopted.

Emergency line seeks language volunteers

By Qiu Jiaoning

Beijing Emergency Medical Center announced on Tuesday that they will begin recruiting volunteers to answer emergency calls in foreign languages for the center's emergency response line.

The emergency line needs fluent speakers of foreign languages able to commit at least four hours a month or 100 hours annually to taking distress calls at the center. There is no restriction on gender, age or nationality, said a spokesperson in a telephone interview on Wednesday.

"As the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games approaches, our center opened hotlines Tuesday on 6609 8203 and 6601 6101 to recruit language volunteers," said the spokesperson. Some 10,800 non-Greek athletes and visitors received emergency treatment during the 2004 Athens Olympics and more than 80 people were hospitalized.

Beijing Emergency Medical Center has 53 Chinese operators, 51 of whom can speak English and 2 of whom can speak French. The center is hoping to find an additional 30 to 50 operators to help deal with athletes and tourists.

The volunteers will help answer the emergency calls under supervision from qualified medical staff. They are expected to have a good command of one or more foreign languages, and volunteers who can offer less popular languages are especially welcome. Registration will remain open through February 2007.

National Museum to be world's largest

By Jiang Xubo

The National Museum of China is set to become one of the world's largest, thanks to an expansion project.

Costing over 2.6 billion yuan (US\$332 million), the expansion will begin next April and will be completed by 2010, says museum curator Lu Zhangshen.

"The museum will expand some 100 meters eastwards and its floor space will reach 192,000-square-meters - the largest in the world," explained Lu. At present, the museum is 300m long and some 150m wide.

The museum's current building, considered one of the capital's ten greatest buildings between the 50s and 70s, will be incorporated into the new architectural layout.

This week, some 620,000 items from the museum's collection will be moved, as part of preparations for the construction. Parts of the museum, however, will remain open to visitors.

"The items will be moved in batches round-the-clock to two temporary storehouses under police protection. The schedule of the restoration will depend on the expansion project's progress," said deputy curator Ma Yingming.

Mao's personal plane makes final touchdown at aviation museum



A plane once reserved for the exclusive use of Mao Zedong was flown to Beijing recently, where it will go on display in an aviation museum.

CFP Photo

Disney to crown Chinese princesses

By Gan Tian

Disney has launched a global competition to choose six girls to represent princess characters from the studio's hit animated movies, and four major Chinese cities will be taking part: Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen.

Six winners will be selected for their singing, dancing, acting and writing abilities, to represent some of Disney's best known characters: Ariel from *Little Mermaid*, Snow White, Princess Jasmine from *Aladdin*, Belle from *Beauty and the Beast*, Aurora from *Sleeping Beauty*, and Cinderella.

Wang Man, of Walt Disney Company Shanghai said, "We want the world to see that Chinese girls also possess the qualities of our princesses."

Because Cinderella, Snow White, Jasmine, the Little Mermaid and some of the other princesses have Caucasian features, there have been concerns as to whether Chinese children can play the roles. Wang said, "Disney believes though faces here are different, a Chinese girl can have the character of a princess."

Security preparations for Olympics intensify

By Jackie Zhang

Beginning in August, the city public security officers will hold drills in readiness for the Olympics, in as many as 100 locations where events are to be held. The Administration of Public Security Team and Beijing Public Security Bureau announced this in a press conference Tuesday.

The Beijing police has already tested its security plans for the Olympics at recent major sporting events like the China Super Football League and China Open.

In the second half of next year, there will be more than 20 test games in order to give the 2008 security plans a test-run.

In addition to the drills, most of the city's recreation facilities have already implemented their own security procedures.

Nine hundred fifty entertainment venues, or 95.8 percent, have installed monitoring cameras, and 34 nightclubs, customers are allowed to enter only after going through a routine security check.

Court case reveals bank interest anomaly

By Chu Meng

The Commercial and Industrial Bank of China on Tuesday won the lawsuit filed by a Beijinger named Duan, in which the bank was sued for calculating interest based only on 360 days of the year, instead of 365.

Duan filed the lawsuit in Chaoyang District Court, when he found he was paid an annual interest of 105.86 yuan less, because the bank did not take the 31st day of the month into account in its interest calculation system.

The court found that the bank's calculation system was in accordance with the regulation granted by the People's Bank of China (PBC) in 1965. But the court's verdict also required the bank to pay 80 percent of Duan's lawsuit expense, because it failed to clearly and concretely inform depositors.

Alao Wang Yuling, director of PBC's legal department, said "it will cost all the banks an enormous amount to change their interest calculation system from 360 days to 365 days. It is not affordable."

Storm over teacup sees army in defamation court case

By Annie Wei

A People's Liberation Army (PLA) unit based in Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province and its senior officer recently filed a lawsuit with a local civil court alleging a website operator had defamed them by spreading rumors online. Their lawyer and representatives of the unit also held a press conference on the matter last week.

The incident first came to light in early August, many members of the army unit were called by family and friends asking about allega-

tions they had read online.

The online article claimed senior officer Qin and some friends had been involved in an incident at the Jinbaifan Spa. They had some tea, and Qin had accidentally broken a tea cup. The manager of the spa asked Qin to pay 500 yuan for compensation, which Qin did to defuse the situation. The article alleged Qin was so angered by the incident that he asked men under his command to smash up the spa.

The allegations spread widely on domestic websites and were

even picked up by overseas media.

Zou Qianglun, the soldiers' lawyer, and Wang Jushan, second in command of the unit, said at the press conference that Qin had never been to the bath center and had never asked any of his men to smash the place up. They were asking the original publisher of the allegations to apologize and pay damages of 150,000 yuan "to protect the reputation of Qin and the unit."

Wu Di, representing the Jinbaifan Spa, said the story was a com-

plete fabrication, and the spa had posted a notice online on August 13 making this clear. They also reported the case to the police August 17.

The operator of the message board where the allegations were made was traced by the police, who named him as Ji Shenghui. Ji denies posting the offending article, claiming the person who did steal his password and username.

Zou Qianglun, representing the soldiers, said that they can prove Ji spread the rumor.

Badminton stars join road safety campaign

By Qiu Jiaoning

Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations that aiming to prevent unintentional childhood injury, and FedEx, one of the world's largest express transportation companies, have joined together to bring the 'Safe Kids Walk This Way Today' program to Beijing today.

Members of the China National Badminton Team (CNBT) will make their first public appearance since their participation in the Doha Asian Games to help raise the campaign's profile.

Beijing students know their Games

By Chu Meng

Awards were presented this Monday to winners of the final round of the Beijing Middle School Student Knowledge Contest of the Olympics 2008. Individual awards were given to 50 students, and 25 middle schools were named as Olympic Knowledge Star Schools.

The contest began in Beijing during April, with, in all, 500,000 students from middle schools taking part. Six teams representing the districts of Xuanwu, Miyun, Shijingshan, Chaoyang, Daxing and Chongwen made it through to the final.

The contest was run by the Beijing Youth Daily and Middle School Times, and sponsored by the Games committee and Snickers.

Brief news

GDP up 10.5

China's gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to exceed 20 trillion yuan (US\$2.56 trillion) this year, up 10.5 percent on last year, according to Ma Kai, minister of the State Development and Reform Commission.

Epidemic disease

A total of 318,287 cases of epidemic disease, including tuberculosis, hepatitis B, dysentery, syphilis, and gonorrhea, have caused 743 deaths last month, according to the Ministry of Health.

National agriculture census

China is to launch the second national agriculture census on December 31, designed to cover some 30,000 townships, 600,000 villages and more than 200 million rural households across the country.

More murders solved

The capital has solved over 88 percent of homicide cases filed in the first 11 months of this year, up eight percent on the clear-up rate for the same period of last year and hitting a 20-year record, according to the Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau.

Retail sales surge

The country's retail sales surged over 14 percent last month on the figure for the same period of last year, hitting over 680 billion yuan (US\$87 billion), the National Bureau of Statistics announced this week.

(By Jiang Xubo/Jackie Zhang)

Golden duels for China



Luo Xiaojuan (right) beat a South Korean athlete to take gold for China in the women's team épée event at the 15th Asian Games, Wednesday.

Xinhua Photo

White paper addresses issues of aging population

By Han Manman

The Information Office of the State Council released a white paper Tuesday highlighting government undertakings for senior citizens over the past two decades and setting out plans for the near future.

The white paper notes that China's population was already aging by the end of the 20th century as the proportion of people aged 60 rose. By the end of 2005, China had nearly 144 million people aged

60 or more, 11 percent of all citizens. The country is predicted to have more than 430 million senior citizens by 2050.

China's population has now reached 1.3 billion and is expected to peak at 1.5 billion in 2030. This will pose a great challenge to China's economic and social development, said the white paper.

"In terms of consumption, the aging population will have a huge influence on China's future social and economic development," Li

Bengong, from the China National Committee on Aging, said at Tuesday's news conference. Li said China's aging population is swelling faster than expected. By 2050, one in every three Chinese citizens will be over 60 years old.

Li emphasized that the two decades starting from 2030 will be a crucial period for the problem of aging. "2032 is a golden opportunity for China, the year represents a key preparation period for coping with the issues," Li said.

English teachers train for online tests

By Huang Daohen

Led by its senior expert, Susan Y. Ramsey, the American Education Testing Service (ETS) will begin offering its training program, known as the Propell workshop, from December 19. The program aims to better teach students to communicate in English with confidence.

It's the first time ETS has made official TOEFL Internet

based test (iBT) training for teachers available in China. After a two-day training in Beijing, similar workshops will be held in Shanghai and Chengdu.

Trainees attending the one-day professional development program for English teachers will be awarded a special ETS certificate.

The training course focuses on guiding new teachers in the

creation of an appropriate academic environment for students, deemed necessary for effective classroom communication.

Through face-to-face interaction with experts, instructional strategies will provide knowledge and know-how on using an 'integrated-skills approach' to teaching language and preparing students for success in the TOEFL iBT.

Years of work in Guangdong battery factories have left hundreds of women suffering from various states of cadmium poisoning – some 150 battle on.

Their class-action lawsuit is the nation's third since suits against Xianjin battery factory (XBF), Huizhou Power Pack Company (HPPC) and Shenzhen-based Jieba battery factory (JBF) began two years ago.

Poisoned workers charge battery maker over unsafe work environment



Fu Hongqin's employment card

By Jiang Xubo

Deaths and birth defects

Fu Hongqin, 23, died of kidney failure in her Sichuan hometown earlier this year. She worked in XBF in Huizhou, Guangdong, which has been closed since the exposure of the cadmium poisoning.

She began her factory work in 2002, and only two years later, her legs and neck swelled. The local hospital diagnosed Fu as suffering from acute kidney failure. After getting leave from work, she returned to Sichuan for further examination.

Her family was shocked to discover she had developed chronic renal failure. Eventually, Fu had severe difficulty moving about, and the toxins her body had already absorbed continued to ravage her skin and organs.

"Three workmates have died so far. It's a severe blow to us. We're afraid it might be our turn soon," Liu Hongmei, a workmate in Fu's factory, said.

But more tragic is the women's suffering will be visited on the next generation.

Two-year-old Rourou inherited the disease from her mother, Zhou Huaqiong, a former HPPC worker. Zhou was two-months pregnant when Fu and other workers fell ill.



Zhou Huaqiong gave birth to daughter with defects.



Women struck when the issue was exposed in 2004.

Beijing Youth Daily Photos



Cadmium powder

"Her body was dark black at birth – only her belly was white," Zhou said. She took her daughter to many hospitals for treatment, but no one could explain what was wrong with the little girl.

Outbreak and lawsuits

In summer 2004, the province's Hospital for Occupational Diseases Control found some 180 workers from the Huizhou-based factories, including Fu, had severely high levels of cadmium in their bodies – two were diagnosed with poisoning. The women suffered from wrist pains, shooting pains in their waists and bones and premature senility.

The three factories are subsidiaries of Hong Kong-based GP Batteries Group. Nickel-cadmium batteries are one of their most popular lines, which use cadmium as conductor.

Cadmium is a heavy metal, which can enter the body orally or through respiration. Once inside, it causes permanent damage to kidneys and bones.

"We wore masks in the workshop, but when we took off the masks after work, we still found our nostrils full of pink powder,"

pensation for diseases, even if a progressive condition that may be fatal.

Ongoing conflict

The factories promised to help the sufferers based on regular, annual tests, but the first test, arranged by HPPC last year, spoiled the initial arrangement and left both sides indignant.

"They arranged for the examination in a hotel and demand we strip. The medical staff refused to show any creden-



Tan Ling, one of the most severely afflicted, was fired in violation of agreements.

tials," Liu Hongying, one of the several dozens of workers who attended, said.

The first examination excluded Fu from its list of sufferers, leaving her treatment to her family – not the factory. It led to her death one year later.

"We try to arrange examinations for those workers, but what can we do? They even doubt if the Guangzhou Center for Disease Control and Prevention is qualified," Lan Jian, an HPPC staff in the human resources department, said.

"The factory failed to arrange the work-up in accordance with the regulations on control and prevention of occupational diseases. It was a pity," said Lu Ying, the lawyer from the Women and Gender Study Center at Zhongshan University who had taken the women's side and offered legal aid in their November appeal.

"Neither side trusts the other now. I wish I could negotiate between them, not as a lawyer, but as a representative for the women. There must be a better way to solve the problem," Lu said.

their contracts out of fear of health consequences.

"We dared not go back to our old positions. We are afraid we may die soon, because we were told there is no cure for the damage," she said.

The women who quit received a one-time compensation package ranging from 3,000 yuan (US\$380) to 20,000 yuan (US\$2,556). They realized quickly they had made a terrible mistake.

"What can we do with a meager compensation like 8,000 yuan (US\$1,022) if our condition gets worse?" Zhou asked.

The women felt trapped and cheated, and filed their claim in the local court last year, seeking to restore their work contracts.

The court refused.

"I began work at my factory when I was 18. Now I'm 27. I gave the best years of my youth to the factory, and what did they pay me with? Nothing but pain and suffering," Wang Jiakun from HPPC said bitterly.

The frustrated women filed a second lawsuit in the first half of the year, demanding 250,000 yuan (US\$32,000) compensation. They failed again. The court claimed the law does not support their demand for com-

Online gaming booms as controls tighten

Beijing (AP) – China is tightening controls on its booming online game industry, requiring distributors to closely monitor game contents after some were found to include forbidden religious or political material, Xinhua reported Tuesday.

Distributors must obtain approval to release new games and submit monthly monitoring reports confirming that operators haven't added forbidden content, Xinhua reported, citing a notice by the Press and Publication Administration.

China has 23 million online game players, up from 13.8 million in 2003, Xinhua reported. It said revenues this year are expected to reach US\$850 million.

The latest crackdown was prompted by "a rash of problems with imported online games, some of which contain sensitive religious material or refer to territorial disputes," Xinhua said. It said some were criticized as pornographic or too violent.

The report gave no details about the religious and territorial issues, but the government is sensitive to references to Islam and the status of Taiwan province.

Regulators said distributors concealed the content of the games when applying for approval, and operators sometimes upgraded games with improper content.



A child plays online at the DigiChina Expo on December 10 in Beijing. Online games provide a virtual reality where young people can escape from the pressures of daily life and study.

CFP Photo

Expert comment

By Jiang Xubo

The authorities need to fully censor imported online games. More attention should be paid to the ideologies they promote, and also the tactics they use to hook players.

Imported online games are usually time-consuming, and

players sometimes waste years of their lives on them. Game systems often encourage players to upgrade character powers and gadgets by accumulating experience. Virtual currency is also a feature of many games, which helps to hook players through something akin to the

lure of gambling.

Other countries usually rate online games as appropriate for different age groups, which helps reduce the risk of teenagers becoming addicted to them.

– Tao Ran, Internet addict treatment center, Beijing Military General Hospital

Beijing taps run dry as population skyrockets to record heights

Beijing (AFP) – Beijing is facing an escalating water crisis amid relentless population growth, with 2010 seen as a crucial time when the capital may have to take drastic measures, local media reports.

There was enough water in Beijing to adequately supply just over 14 million people in 2005, but the city had 15 million permanent residents and four million migrant workers at the end of last year, Xinhua news agency reported Tuesday.

The situation, complicated by a drought that has gripped northern China for years, will steadily worsen

by 2010, when another three million people are expected to have joined the city's permanent population, it reported.

To deal with the problem, the city may have to slash water consumption to levels "that would result in water rationing and higher prices that would affect the quality of the average resident's life," Xinhua reported, citing a study in the *China Economic Weekly*.

The city government is pinning its remaining hopes on central government policies aimed at producing more geographically balanced growth throughout the country.

Expert comment

By Jiang Xubo

The water shortage is one of the best justifications for introducing controls on the capital's population. People who come to Beijing consume water not only through personal use, but also in their work.

Migrant workers have contributed a lot to the capital's development, but we have to be aware that Beijing is a city with meager resources, and we have to control its population.

In addition, the capital's market for unskilled workers is limited. More and more locally-born people have entered this labor pool and are competing with migrant workers for jobs in sectors like domestic service, construction and garbage collection.

– Zhang Yun, Beijing Academy of Social Science

Robbery, rape top list of minor's crimes

Beijing (angolapress-angop.ae) – Robbery, rape and intentional injury or homicide are the top three most committed crimes among Chinese criminals under 18 years old, a report released by the China National Children's Center said.

According to the report on Chinese children's life and development, children who committed one of the three crimes account for 68.7 percent, 14 percent and 8 percent respectively of all minor criminals.

Of young criminals in detention, a number not revealed in the report, only 16.8 percent finished

nine-year compulsory schooling, and 61.4 percent turned to crime after an idle period of no formal schooling or employment.

The average age of young offenders was 15.7. Most of them were from broken homes or those where relations between parents were poor.

Other factors cited included coming from families where other members had criminal records, and improper education from their childhood.

A lack of ethical education at school and bad influence from adults were also identified as causes of juvenile crime.

Expert comment

By Jiang Xubo

Robbery has replaced theft as the top crime committed by minors, meaning children are more likely to turn to violence nowadays. A negative cultural atmosphere created by the media, including movies, TV, Internet and books, has contributed to this.

Family is of great importance in educating teenagers and preventing minors from turning to crime. Parents set the first examples for their children to see, for good or bad, so they should be well aware of their behaviors' impact on their offspring.

Society, especially local communities, should get involved in this issue, and the government should take initiative. Shanghai launched a government-funded program two years ago, assigning full-time workers to help teenagers who have difficulties with their studies and other issues. The program works well in preventing juvenile crimes.

– Xi Jieying, Chinese Society of Juvenile Criminal Research

Chinese river dolphin almost extinct

Beijing, December 13 (Reuters) – A rare freshwater dolphin unique to China's Yangtze River is almost certainly extinct, a Swiss conservationist said after failing to spot a single animal on an expedition which ended on Wednesday.

The *baiji*, traditionally thought to be a river god, used to live along China's longest river, but development, overfishing and shipping have proven lethal.

"Unfortunately the *baiji* is functionally extinct. We did not see any animals in the river," August Pfluger, chief executive of the *baiji.org* foundation, told Reuters in an interview this week.

"If there are maybe one or two or three left in the river, we don't believe that they have any chance to survive. We were obviously too late. For me, it's a tragedy in terms of conservation. We lost the race."

The long-beaked, nearly blind *baiji* is related to other freshwater species found in the Mekong, Indus, Ganges and Amazon rivers.

The last confirmed sighting was in 2004 and the last captive *baiji*, Qiqi, died in 2002.

New campaign to fight piracy

Beijing (indiatimes.com) – China has launched yet another nationwide campaign to curb rampant piracy ahead of the first-round of the Sino-US Strategic Economic Dialog, which began yesterday.

The new campaign, based on achievements made by a recent 100-day national campaign, aims to strengthen everyday supervision to further clean up the video, software and publication markets and raise public awareness and encourage use of legal copies of products, the national anti-pornography and anti-piracy office said.

The campaign will hunt down producers of pirated movies, books and software, targeting their distribution chains. The smuggling of pirating equipment will be severely punished, a statement from the office said.

The campaign will target street vendors and mobile distributors of pirated DVDs, CDs or software, and those who sell pirated products at markets will have their pitches taken away, it said.

It will also target those who produce pirated textbooks and those who organize the purchase of pirated textbooks or reference books will be held accountable, the statement said.

China launched its biggest ever crackdown on piracy in July. The three-month campaign, which ended in September, confiscated more than 58 million pirated movies, music, books and software and other items.

Distributors of legitimate DVDs and CDs in Beijing and Guangzhou saw a 20 percent rise in their sales in July and August due to the campaign, the office claimed.

Home Depot, GE Aviation seal their China deals

Beijing, December 13 (AP) – US retailer Home Depot Inc signed an agreement Wednesday to buy a chain of Chinese home improvement stores and GE Aviation announced a jet engine sale as US and Chinese companies announced deals ahead of a visit to Beijing by US Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson for trade talks.

The deals were signed at a ceremony attended by US Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez, a

member of Paulson's delegation.

Such deals are frequently announced ahead of US-Chinese meetings as Beijing tries to mollify American critics of its soaring trade surplus with the United States.

The value of Atlanta-based Home Depot's purchase of China's HomeWay was estimated at US\$100 million.

HomeWay was established 10 years ago and runs 14 Do-It-Yourself stores in northern China.

As for Home Depot, it already operates a large outsourcing business in China, with a network of more than 500 suppliers. About 10 percent of its products come from the country.

GE said the engine sale to Shanghai Airlines was worth US\$550 million.

Also signed on Wednesday were deals by Oshkosh Truck Corp to sell US-made airport rescue and fire-fighting equipment to Quzhou Air-

port in Zhejiang province in eastern China, and a deal between VeriSign and the China Netcom Group and the Ministry of Information and Industry to set up a system to help create domain names.

"Commercial engagement built on fair, effective rules is the foundation of the healthy, strong and continually growing trade relationship that we envision between China and the United States," Gutierrez said.

Foreign banks get nod for yuan deposits

Shanghai, December 12 (Reuters) – The London-based HSBC Holdings Plc said China Banking Regulatory Commission had confirmed its yuan business license, allowing the bank to take deposits from Chinese nationals for amounts of no less than one million yuan (US\$127,700).

Its major rival in China, Standard Chartered Plc, said it had won the same confirmation.

HSBC will offer the services in nine cities where it has already set up branches, while Standard Chartered can conduct the new business at its seven city branches.

Citigroup had been given the same licence and the bank will announce the details soon.

They are also applying to register in China as local banks so they can offer a wider range of yuan services, for instance, without limits on the amount of deposits they can take from local individual clients.

Joining them for the new registration include the Bank of East Asia, Hang Seng Bank, Mizuho Corporate Bank, DBS Bank and ABN AMRO.

Local banks gear up for competition

By Chu Meng

Chinese banks are working to maintain their share of renminbi business. This week, the Bank of Beijing opened exclusive counters for South Korean customers, and CITIC added bilingual Chinese and English signs in all their branches.

"Foreign banks do not pose a significant threat in the short term," Zhang Jianguo, president of China Construction Bank Corporation said this Wednesday. "They will continue to lag behind Chinese banks in branch coverage and client base for the foreseeable future."

Domestic banks have more extensive networks. The total of 70,000 branches of China's four biggest state-owned lenders dwarf the 214 for overseas banks," Zhang said.

Foreign banks have more than doubled profits from business in China over the past five years, and now aim to tap the nation's US\$2 trillion of household savings, partly by offering credit cards and asset-management services. They earned a combined US\$446 million last year, compared with US\$196 million in 2001.

Chicken prices fly higher



A Kentucky Fried Chicken employee welcomes a customer at a drive-thru in Beijing.

Yum Brands is pushing ahead with plans to add more drive-thru restaurants to its KFC business in China, but is taking a more cautious

approach than rival McDonald's.

Both KFC say they will raise their prices by five to ten percent due to the recent price hike of daily necessities in China.

Reuters Photo

Association launched for SMEs

Beijing, December 13 (Reuters) – China recently set up an association for small and medium-sized enterprises this week to help promote their development.

Vice Premier Zeng Peiyan said at the inauguration ceremony that the number of SMEs had risen rapidly in recent years and SMEs had played an important role in

the country's economic growth and employment.

He urged the SMEs to pay more attention to environmental protection and social responsibility.

Enterprises should be guided towards labor-intensive industry, modern service industry, equipment manufacturing and hi-tech industry, said Zeng.

The vice premier called for the market entry rules for SMEs to be relaxed further.

"The association should serve as a link between SMEs and the government," said the vice premier.

Statistics show that 99.6 percent of Chinese companies are SMEs, which contribute 58 percent to the country's GDP.

Retailers face location hurdle

By Qiu Jiaoning

Most retailers in China are confident about next year's trading prospects, but the biggest hurdle is location, a Jones Lang LaSalle survey report said Tuesday.

According to the report, retail sales have grown 10 percent annually. China's retailers are among Asia's most aggressive in expand-

sion; 92 percent expect to expand next year; but 89 percent said locating at suitable sites would be difficult, mainly due to lack of quality space and cost.

Quality management has been a consistent requirement across all property types in China, and is certainly key to the shopping experience, David Hand, head

of China Retail for Jones Lang LaSalle said.

Rule changes due to China's WTO commitments mean foreign retailers may lose or risk not having strategic landlord and developer relationships. Fostering relationships with key developers and making use of quality retail leasing agents is a way to gain access.

Bank of Beijing picks brokers for IPO

Hong Kong, December 10 (DowJones) – Bank of Beijing, the country's second largest city commercial bank by assets, mandated Merrill Lynch, Goldman Sachs, and Citic Securities to lead an initial public offering of up to US\$1 billion.

The bank, 19.9 percent owned by ING Group, is bidding to become the first of China's smaller city lenders to list shares after a parade of initial public offerings by China's big state banks.

The IPO of H-shares is expected to be launched in Hong

Kong in the first half of 2007. The company is still discussing whether to list in Shanghai simultaneously or after.

The World Bank's private-sector investment arm, the International Finance Corp, also owns a 5 percent stake in the bank.

MGM Mirage comes to China

New York, December 13 (Reuters) – MGM Mirage Inc, the No 2 US gambling company, is in talks with Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing to create joint-venture non-gaming luxury hotels and resorts.

The two sides will initially target locations in China, MGM Mirage said, adding that a definitive agreement is expected in the first quarter of 2007.

New flights to Saipan and St Paul

Beijing, December 10 (saipantribune.com) – Air China will take off the first regular chartered flight from Beijing to Saipan on December 17. The flight will arrive in Saipan at 3:30am the same day. The flights will be twice a week on Fridays and Mondays.

Air China opened Beijing-St Paul flights this week. The first flight, CA907, took off on December 10. Two flights will be available every Thursday and Sunday.

Perfect World explores overseas

Beijing, December 12 (News-wire) – Beijing Perfect World, an online game developer, joined Level Up Inc to enter the Filipino market.

The company launched its first online game, 'Perfect World' in 2005, which has become the most favored online 3D game in China.

The company entered Taiwan in July this year. It released the Japanese edition of the 'Perfect World' in the same month.

Cisco to offer new services

Beijing, December 13 (Business Wire) – Cisco has invested US\$50 million in China Communications Services Corporation this week.

The two sides will jointly provide managed telecommunications services, such as network operation and administration, to enterprise customers in China. Additionally, they will provide customers with new network solutions, including IP infrastructures, digital video, and 3G platforms and applications.

IBM and Intel open energy center

Beijing, December 14 (Red-Nova) – IBM announced its first energy competency center in China, a joint effort by IBM and Intel.

The center will provide oil and gas companies with the technologies to find and extract hydrocarbon deposits more quickly and efficiently, while controlling costs and reducing risks.

Risks catalogued for companies

By Annie Wei

The China Export and Credit Insurance Corporation, the only policy-supported body of its kind in China, released its country risk report for 2007 this week, claiming it is an essential reading for ambitious Chinese enterprises to expand business abroad.

The new edition, like the previous one, provides information on more than 190 countries. Tang Ruoxi, from the company, said a lack of good information has long been an issue for many Chinese companies seeking to operate overseas.

Views mixed on Cheney's pregnancy



Mary Cheney (left) and her partner Heather Poe

AP Photo

Associated Press

Washington — Conservative leaders voiced dismay Wednesday at news that Mary Cheney, lesbian daughter of Dick Cheney, is pregnant, while a gay-rights group said the vice president faces "a lifetime of sleepless nights" for serving in an administration that has opposed recognition of same-sex couples.

Mary Cheney, 37, and her partner of 15 years, Heather Poe, 45, are expecting a baby in late spring, said Lea Anne McBride, a spokeswoman for the vice president. "The vice president and Mrs Cheney are looking forward with eager anticipation" to the arrival of their sixth grandchild, McBride said.

Mary Cheney was an aide to her father during the 2004 campaign, and now is vice president

for consumer advocacy at AOL. She and Poe moved from Colorado to Virginia a year ago to be closer to the Cheney family.

For years, Mary Cheney's openness about her sexual orientation posed a dilemma for conservative activists who admire Dick Cheney's stance on many issues but consider homosexuality a sin.

There was no doubt that the news would, in conservatives' eyes, be damaging to the Bush administration, which already has been chided by some leaders on the right for what they felt was halfhearted commitment to anti-abortion and anti-gay-rights causes in this year's general election. The vice president's office, however, declined to elaborate on the circumstances of Mary Cheney's pregnancy.

Comments

Being raised by a same sex couple is not damaging to a child in any way. I know it shocks and horrifies the religious fundamentalists, who will deny and discount that notion, but it's true. A child needs love and support most of all. Whether that comes from two moms, two dads, or a mom and a dad is very secondary.

— Think People

Actually, homosexuality has been observed among humans for thousands of years. It has always been 'normal' for a small percentage of the population to be homosexual. That is true, no matter how much you don't like it.

— Charlie E

It takes the opposite sex to procreate. Same sex partners can't

do this. If opposite sex partners stop having babies and donating sperm like in this instance, mankind ends. It's really that simple. Life stops.

— wisdom

Mary and Heather, congratulations! What a wonderful thing to happen to any couple. Children are a blessing and a blessing they should remain. Mary and Heather, I make the best baby blankets — where can I send one?

— W. Sullivan

"Freedom means freedom for everyone," as Dick Cheney said in Iowa in 2004. I am glad to see the man show some humanity and warmth. Many who knew him years ago say he had it. Where his daughter is concerned, he still has it. Give him credit when he deserves it.

— Peter

This is another perfect example of why sperm banks should be closed. If heterosexual couples are meant to have a baby, God will see to it that they do. If they can't conceive then they aren't meant to. And homosexuals have no business bringing children into their perverted world.

— Fed Up

Same sex marriage has been legal in Massachusetts for several years, and guess what? The world has not ended, the sun still shines there, and all residents of Massachusetts are allowed to have the same legal protection.

— naima

I wish the best for Mary and her partner. What a wonderful thing to bring a child into the world with obviously two loving parents. God Bless Mary and her new baby!

— Zounds

US bugged Diana's phone on night of crash

Guardian

The American secret service was bugging Princess Diana's telephone conversations without the approval of British security services on the night she died, according to the most comprehensive report on her death, to be published this week.

Among extraordinary details due to emerge in the report by former Metropolitan police commissioner Lord Stevens is the revelation that the US secret service was bugging her calls in the hours before she was killed in a car crash in Paris.

In a move that raises fresh questions over transatlantic agreements on intelligence-sharing, the surveillance arm of the US has admitted listening to her conversations as she stayed at the Ritz hotel, but failed to notify MI6, the UK's overseas intelligence service. Stevens is understood to have been assured that the 39 classified documents detailing Diana's final conversations did not reveal anything sinister or contain material that might help explain her death.

Scotland Yard's inquiry, published last Thursday, also throws up further intelligence links with

Diana Spencer was known as the 'People's Princess'.
Guardian Photo

Comments

Kind of an alarmist headline. The NSA 'bugs' every phone call, email and fax on the planet through Echelon. No biggie, been doing it for years. Diana was privy to the highest levels of the UK government, and it's not surprising that we would hope to listen in on some of those conversations.

— taxed2death

Actually, it turns out that the driver of the car was an assassin with the French Secret Fashion Police.

— dr_who_2

It is common for countries to bug the communications of top people in other's governments. It is not illegal, and there would be no consequences. I wonder if the CIA in fact was suspecting that there would be

an attempt to harm her - Diana was very friendly to the US and might have asked for help

— Mac

Actually, since they were doing it without permission from either the British or French government it would have been illegal. There's no law that would permit the wholesale eavesdropping on anyone in a foreign country, let alone government officials.

— wolfman2001

Of course she was under surveillance, because of the association she had with her then boyfriend. And in regards to anyone being in trouble, I doubt it. The royal family could care less. I still believe they got rid of her. Poor Diana. She will be missed.

— Critical_Conformity

Weekly topics

Guardian (UK)

1. US\$20bn gas project seized by Russia
2. Holocaust deniers gather in Iran for 'scientific' conference
3. Mourinho's Blues need reshaping and restocking
4. Britain stops talk of 'war on terror'

New York Times (US)

1. In tuition game, popularity rises with price
2. Senator Clinton adviser stays in shadows
3. Eastern Europe struggles to purge security services
4. The cost of an overheated planet
5. Huge profit at Goldman brings big bonuses

Toronto Star (Canada)

1. MADD suspends fund-raising
2. Facing discipline, senior Mounties retired
3. Law puts brakes on school dropouts
4. Nurses strained from all sides, Statscan finds
5. Province unveils bill to protect patients

The Australian (Australia)

1. Airline bombing plot charges dropped
2. White river dolphin declared extinct
3. Child safety workers threaten strike

4. Suicide truck bombs kill nine soldiers
5. Qantas may be open to new bid

Newsweek (US)

1. New hope for detection of Alzheimer's
2. Bush eventually to read Iraq report
3. Taiwan leans away from China
4. The Taliban's book of rules
5. Race against time after UK prostitutes slain

(By Huang Daohen)

Bush Sr is a star at charity night



Bush Sr chats with a guest

By Chen Shasha

George Bush Sr, former US President, made his 18th visit to China this week. During his speech at the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), he expressed hope to return to China for the 2008 Olympic Games, and even to make another tandem jump.

Star of Charity Night

This Wednesday, Bush attended the Chinese Charity Night, one of the largest of its kind attended by top Chinese actors and businessmen. However, Bush and wife Barbara were the stars of the night.

"He's always been my idol. I respected him – especially when he made a successful tandem jump for his 80th birthday. He set a good example for people of all ages," Wang Jingyan, a Liaoning TV reporter, said.

Like Wang, many reporters arrived at the Beijing Hotel before 6pm to wait for him. When Bush arrived on Star Boulevard with a group of bodyguards around 7pm, he was flooded in flashes. The 82-year-old staggered and walked slow, but smiled to the public as he signed his name with his left hand.

Donation

George Bush is an old friend of China. When he served as chief of the US Liaison Office in

Beijing, he toured nearly every part of the city on his bicycle. On the charity night, he skillfully ate with chopsticks in his left hand and a spoon in his right. Earlier that day, President Hu Jintao met him and praised him for his contributions to China-US relations.

On Wednesday, Bush donated US\$10,000 to the Yanran Fund, the first fund for children born with a cleft lip in China. The charity was set up by Li Yapeng, a Chinese actor, and his wife, Wang Fei, one of Asia's most successful singers. Li's newborn daughter was born with a cleft lip and underwent surgery in America.

"I never knew China had so many cleft lip children before my daughter was born. I'm happy Bush could donate to China's poor children. The US\$10,000 is very important to the fund, and many poor children can be treated with the money. My wife and I will keep working for the fund in the future," Li said.

Dream of tandem jump

Bush continues to encourage people – not only in his charity work. Bush made his first parachute jump as a 20-year-old navy pilot shot down over the Pacific during World War II. In 1992, he jumped over Yuma, Arizona, fulfilling a wartime promise he made to one day jump from a plane for fun.

However, the dream never ended. Bush said he hoped to make another tandem jump in 2008. "Will any of you students accompany me?" Bush asked the audience during his speech at the CAS. According to him, to be old doesn't mean you have to mean inactive, he still feels excited to parachute, and hopes to have another try.

Zheng Bijian, dean of the humanities department at the CAS, said Bush was invited to be honorary director general of the 2008 Olympic Tours and will surely return to China.

Bush Sr gets Beijing welcome
Photos by Tian Yufeng

Mellow Snow-Park Tour finals on Saturday

By Annie Wei

The onset of winter heralds the coming of a new snowboarding season, and with that, snowboarding competitions.

This Saturday marks the finals of the Nanshan Mellow SnowPark Tour, the most well-known snowboarding contest in town. The event offers spectators a chance to see China's best snowboarders in action, with some competitors coming all the way from Shanghai and Hong Kong.

The Mellow SnowPark Tour began four years ago as a small gathering of Chinese and expat riders in town. With a three-part contest series, the tour eventually attracted snowboarders from other parts of China, and helped establish the country's snowboarding scene.

Growing attraction

"More and more people are becoming interested in the sport. I set up XandX snowboarding club because I wanted to promote snowboarding, especially among young people," Li Xianyi, one of the top local riders, said. He formed the club four months ago and now has around 300 members.

Despite growing popularity of the sport, Li said snowboarding events were still rare compared to other sporting activities in China. Many Chinese snowboarders do not start until they are in their 20s, which can be a detriment to mastering the sport.

Winning moves

The Mellow SnowPark Tour's two previous legs were held in Hebei's Wanlong Ski Resort last week and Shanghai's Qixing Indoor Ski Dome two weeks ago. Winners of the series will get an all-expense-paid trip to Austria to participate in a summer snowboarding camp in the Alps, and training courses taught by professional riders.

Buy UNICEF Greeting Cards/Gifts and Help Children in China

购买联合国儿童基金会的贺卡/礼品 帮助中国贫困儿童



MAKE A WISH

—Buy a Card, Support a Child
In true festive spirit, when you give beautiful UNICEF cards and gifts to family, friends and clients this season, your generosity reaches many more than just those on your list. Your purchase enables children in China to benefit from the life-saving and life-changing gifts of healthcare, better nutrition and basic education particularly for girls and protection of disadvantaged groups.

What is special about UNICEF cards?

The UNICEF greeting card program has a 51-year history that began when a seven-year old girl in the former Czechoslovakia gave her drawing to UNICEF to say "thank you" for the help she received. Today, UNICEF cards are sold in many countries using designs donated by artists from all over the world.

Most people don't know that 10 percent of UNICEF's worldwide programs are funded by sales of its cards and gifts. And if you or your company sends UNICEF cards, the recipients may buy the cards next year. That's significant, because the more cards we sell, the more children we can reach.

UNICEF cards are printed on recycled paper, and they're great for a variety of occasions: Birthdays, Anniversaries, Get Well, Thinking of You, Season's Greetings, and general use. You can also give them as gifts to your family and friends. Proceeds from cards sold in China are used exclusively for projects in China.

Cards are usually sold in packs of 10 costing RMB70-85 (about US\$10). The money goes a long way: Just RMB1 provides a year's supply of Vitamin A supplements for a Chinese child, boosting her immune system and reducing his chances of childhood mortality. If you're in Beijing, you can come to see the colourful cards on display at our showroom (from now to Dec. 24, 2006, open all week days, 8:30-17:30), conveniently located in central Beijing at 12 Sanlitun Road in Chaoyang District.

Also, welcome to our stand sale and appreciate the support from the following hotels and department stores:

Kempinski Hotel Beijing Lufthansa Center Nov. 15, 2006 - Feb. 28, 2007
Jing Lun Hotel Dec. 1 - 5, 2006
The Kerry Mall Dec. 1 - 25, 2006
Pacific Century, Beijing Dec. 1 - 28, 2006
China World Shopping Mall Dec. 1 - 28, 2006
Full Tower Dec. 4 - 8, 2006
Beijing Xidan Pacific Department Store Co., Ltd. 5th Floor Dec. 8 - 24, 2006

You can contact us by calling (+8610) 6532-3131, UNICEF
- Extension 2205 / 6 for Beijing
- Extension 2204 for East China
- Extension 2207 for South China



A Long Way from Home

13-year-old Xue Lian and her 11-year-old sister Xue Yuan spent six months and many miles away from home to beg, sell flowers and collect empty bottles and cans in the city, all for a meagre RMB200.

The sisters were forced to drop out of the school and leave their rural home in Anhui when their father fell ill with tuberculosis.

"We were so afraid we would not be able to find our way back home," remembers Xue Lian. Finally, local police picked up the girls and took them to a children's association center in Hefei, a UNICEF-supported program that helps kids like Xue Lian and Xue Yuan find their way back home.

UNICEF continues to support projects such as this and works with the Chinese government to return street children to safe environment and give them access to basic services, such as education.

Note: the children's names have been changed to protect their identity.



衷心感谢社会各界贺卡与礼品购买人, 特别鸣谢以下单位 (按字母排序) :

埃森哲
爱尔康(中国)眼科
安利(中国)日用品有限公司
奥迪中国
北京青年报社
北京融鼎投资有限公司
北青传媒股份有限公司
成都深长成地产有限公司
德国莱茵TUV中国集团
佳能(中国)有限公司
锦江麦德龙现购自运有限公司
康明斯
阅风艺术画廊

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南都房产集团
南京新力传媒有限公司
荣祥
赛诺菲安万特集团
三菱商事(中国)商业有限公司
山西国贸大酒店
上海长宁国际学校
上海日报
上海统一星巴克咖啡有限公司
深圳企业家摄影学会
斯道拉恩索中国
苏州阳光新地置业有限公司



UNICEF report calls society to help children by empowering women

By Qiu Jiaoning

A report unveiled by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "The State of the World's Children 2007," in Beijing, Friday, said eliminating gender discrimination and empowering women will have a profound and positive impact on the survival and well-being of children.

According to the report, women's influence in key decisions improves the lives of women and has a positive effect

on child well-being and development. The report states women don't always have an equal say in crucial household decisions, which can have negative consequences for children.

In only 10 of 30 developing countries surveyed did 50 percent or more of the women participate in all household decisions, including those regarding major household spending, their health care or visits to friends and relatives outside the home.

Women's ability to control

their lives and make decisions that affect their families is closely linked to child nutrition, health and education, the report said. In families where women are key decision-makers, the proportion of resources devoted to children is far greater than those in which women have a less decisive role.

As a result of discrimination, girls are less likely to attend school; nearly one in five girls who enroll in primary school in developing countries doesn't complete

primary education. Education levels among women, the report says, correlate with improved outcomes for child survival and development.

"If we care about the health and well-being of children today and in the future, we must work now to ensure women and girls have equal opportunities to be educated, to participate in government, to achieve economic self-sufficiency and to be protected from violence and discrimination," Veneman said.

CBI Director-General posted in China

By Chen Shasha

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) will post Richard Lambert, director-general of CBI, in its Beijing office next March, Andy Scott, Director of International and UK Operations of CBI, said during his visit to China this week.

With China's annual economic growth rate hovering around 10 percent, and greater interest from UK companies towards China, CBI chose to open an office in Beijing this February - its third office outside the UK.

"China has changed a lot since

entering the World Trade Organization. Many regulations have been put in effect and it has adjusted its national regulation to meet international standards," Scott said. Still, he said many regulations are still lagging, and the management skills of Chinese international companies leave much to be desired. He said he hopes China's market will respect intellectual property rights.

CBI is one of the UK's leading independent employers' organizations, and aims to help create and sustain conditions in which UK businesses can compete and prosper.

South African Tourism designs traveling lines for Chinese costumers

By Gan Tian

Manqoba Nyembeji, South African Tourism team in tow, came to Beijing Monday to introduce his country's new travel lines designed by his colleagues. After that the group went to Hangzhou, Chengdu and Shenzhen to experience these cities and introduce their product.

"South African Tourism has designed six lines especially for Chinese travelers. Nowadays, white-collars want to experience a brand new way of traveling, and we pro-

vide this opportunity for them," their secretary said. He also mentioned that since the China-Africa Forum, more and more people have taken interest in Africa.

The six lines, themed as diamond, adventure, golf, culture, wildlife and African pride, are suitable for travelers looking to experience African views.

The six lines are available in mainstream tourism agencies. Most are priced under 20,000 yuan each, which will make travel accessible to more income brackets.

China gets pass for incentive tourism

By Huang Daohen

The Society of Incentive and Travel Executives (SITE) China Branch was officially launched in Beijing, Yu Debin, vice director of the Beijing Tourism Bureau, said at a new conference held on Tuesday.

"The international incentive tourist groups were always hesitant to cooperate with us in the past, because we were not a SITE member. We are not worried about that anymore," Yu said.

Incentive tourism is a global management tool drawing on exceptional travel experience to foster networking and professional development among individuals and business entities involved in the use of motivation, incentives, and travel rewards.

Founded in 1973, SITE is the only international, non-profit association devoted to the pursuit of excellence in incentives.

SITE's China Branch has, to date, as many as 25 members. The launch means Beijing has received an international permit for incentive tourism.



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Learn to race from the pros

By Annie Wei

Porsche racing team CSC is holding a five-day professional driving course in Thailand in January, the first time professional training has been made accessible to amateur racing enthusiasts.

A leading team in the China Circuits Championship, Chinese-owned CSC's two head drivers are both from Thailand. One of them, Charoensukha-

watana Nattavude, called Thailand's "racing king," will be one of the training coaches.

"We realized that many racing fans have no access to professional training," Pei Pei, CSC's PR manager, said. "That means it's hard for them to find the right place and the right coach."

In China, more and more people are becoming interested in car racing, so it's a good target

market for the training. "It does not matter if you're not going to be a professional car racer," Yan Lu, CSC's team manager, said. "It's still fun, especially for people who love the fun of driving."

The team says Thailand is the perfect place for the training: it has tropical weather and more experience with auto racing than China.

The cost of the five-day training

is 38,000 yuan (US\$4,859), which includes accommodation and plane fare. At present, there are five applicants from China: two from Hong Kong and the rest from Beijing. After the training, participants will be awarded the International Federation of Automobiles's D-class Pro-driver license, the first step to becoming a racing professional.

For more information, call 6462 8141.

Hark the herald shopping spree



Beijing has plenty of decorations ready for the Christmas season, as local stores seek to benefit from the traditional consumption boom.

IC Photo

Holiday in the UK

By Jackie Zhang

Three famous universities, University of Oxford, University of Cambridge and University of Birmingham, are on the list of a new weeklong winter tour around the isle organized by the British Council.

During the trip, visitors will visit universities every morning under the guidance of experienced university staff. From the campus to its lecture halls, libraries and dorms, guests will experience everything the universities have to offer.

Although the trip is partly designed for students to familiarize themselves with and visit many famous UK universities, participants will also have the chance to visit historical sites, guided by professional, local tour guides.

The trip will run from February 20-28. Two travel routes are available, each of which contains different destinations in Britain.

Seven Beijing study abroad agencies are in charge of accepting applications. Contact information is available at educationuk.cn/uni-tour/. The deadline for signup is next February and total cost for the trip is 19,900 yuan.

Israeli artist, Chinese ink

By Chen Shasha

A one-of-a-kind solo art exhibit, Possibility and Necessity, showing groups of ink paintings by an Israeli artist, opened at 798 Art District's Rain Gallery last weekend.

This was artist Yair Lior's first solo exhibit since he began researching Chinese ink paintings seven years ago. "Chinese ink paintings are so beautiful, and I was greatly attracted to them when I was in Tel-Aviv University," Lior said.

Born in Jerusalem in 1975,



Lior (middle) with guests

he spent his childhood in the US, and then moved to Switzerland. At the age of 19, he returned to Israel and studied philosophy in Tel-Aviv. In 2001,

he again left his home to come to China and pursue his love of Chinese art.

"My inspiration mainly came from the paintings and calligraphy of China's Yuan dynasty," he said.

Lior's work depicts Chinese landscapes, portraits and calligraphy using traditional art instruments such as natural-hair brushes, ink, traditional paper and seals.

His exhibition will last until December 28.

Photo by Ma Hongwen

Russian Realism paintings on exhibit

By Jackie Zhang

Russian Realism paintings from the late-1800s were put on exhibit at the National Art Museum of China on Wednesday. The collection is made up of 118 paintings on loan

from 19 museums in Russia, including portraits, landscapes, genre paintings and paintings depicting important historical events.

The latter half of the 19th century was the period when

influential Russian painters made their mark, among them, Ilya Repin and Ivan I. Shishkin.

The exhibit, which ends January 15, is one of the most important activities to mark the end of the Russian Year in China.

British film and music video lights up Beijing

By Chen Shasha

In celebration of the holiday season, the British Council will hold a large film exhibition in Beijing, where nearly 30 films from varied genres will be screened.

"It's the first activity of its kind by the British Council in

Beijing," Shen Yan, organizer of the exhibition, said.

This weekend, four modern art films will be shown at the China Film Archive, some of them screened in China for the first time.

Next Tuesday, a short film package containing five docu-

mentaries will be shown at 798 Art District's Hart Center of Art.

The day's show will present new British directors' thoughts on the country's migrants, the so-called "second generation UK," and their national and cultural identity crisis.

Events

'It's a Wonderful Life': A Christmas screening at the Bookworm

Be whisked into Christmas frenzy with a festive screening of this classic film. Two glasses of delicious mulled wine plus Christmas canap's included.

When: Friday, December 15, 7:30pm

Cost: 40 yuan members; 50 yuan non-members

Book Worm Wine Club

There's only one drink worth mentioning at this time of year - champagne! Quaff with the connoisseurs at Bookworm Wine Club where you're invited to try four fabulous champagnes, and sample delectable Christmas canap's.

When: Thursday, December 21, 7:30pm

Cost: 150 yuan per person.

Tour of Great Wall Mutianyu and Ming Tombs

Where: Meet at the Chinese Culture Club. Bus leaves at 9:30 am and returns at around 7pm.

When: Saturday, December 16, 8:30am-7pm

Cost: 350 yuan (includes transportation, all tickets and lunch. Cable car fee excluded)

Traditional art tour

This is an expert guided tour of the Beijing Art Academy to appreciate original scroll painting masterpieces, including that of Qi Baishi, one of the most famous Chinese artists of the 20th century.

Where: Meet at the ground floor of the Big Easy, South Gate of Chaoyang Park, and then move to the gallery

When: Sunday, December 17, 2-4:30pm

Cost: Admission: 100 yuan (includes ticket)

Hutong and courtyard houses pedicab tour

The tour leader will guide you around the hutongs and courtyards in south Beijing's Xuanwu District, where you will see old alleys and courtyard houses. Get a glimpse of Beijingers' life, chat with residents, visit a local kindergarten, tour a vegetable and meat market, and take a leisurely walk down the street.

Where: Meet inside the ground floor of KFC (next to the Lao She Teahouse), Qianmen Street, southwest of Tiananmen Square.

When: Wednesday, December 20, 2:30-4:30pm

Cost: 160 yuan (includes pedicab ride and all visits)

For more information about the Chinese Culture Club's activities, please call 6432 9341.

GreenPeace a cappella concert: My voice, my future

To raise public awareness for electronic waste, GreenPeace invites three bands to perform "unplugged."

When: Thursday, December 28, 7pm

Admission: 20 yuan

Where: Beijing University Hall (Bainian Jinian Jiangtang), Beijing University, Haidian

For more information, contact Mariah Zhao at 6554 6931 ext 107 or zhao.yan@cn.greenpeace.org

(By He Jianwei)

1. What goes on in a traditional teahouse other than tea drinking?

As tea is a traditional Chinese drink and China is quite big, different regions have their own teahouse customs. The most famous teahouse in Beijing is the Laoshu Teahouse, located in Qianmen (No 3 Qianmen Xi Dajie). It offers traditional local tea, and puts on performances while you drink. There are also teahouses decorated with traditional Chinese furniture and which plays traditional Chinese music. Purple Vine located next to Building 28, Sanlitun, Chaoyang is an example.

2. Can I haggle with taxi drivers over my cab fare?

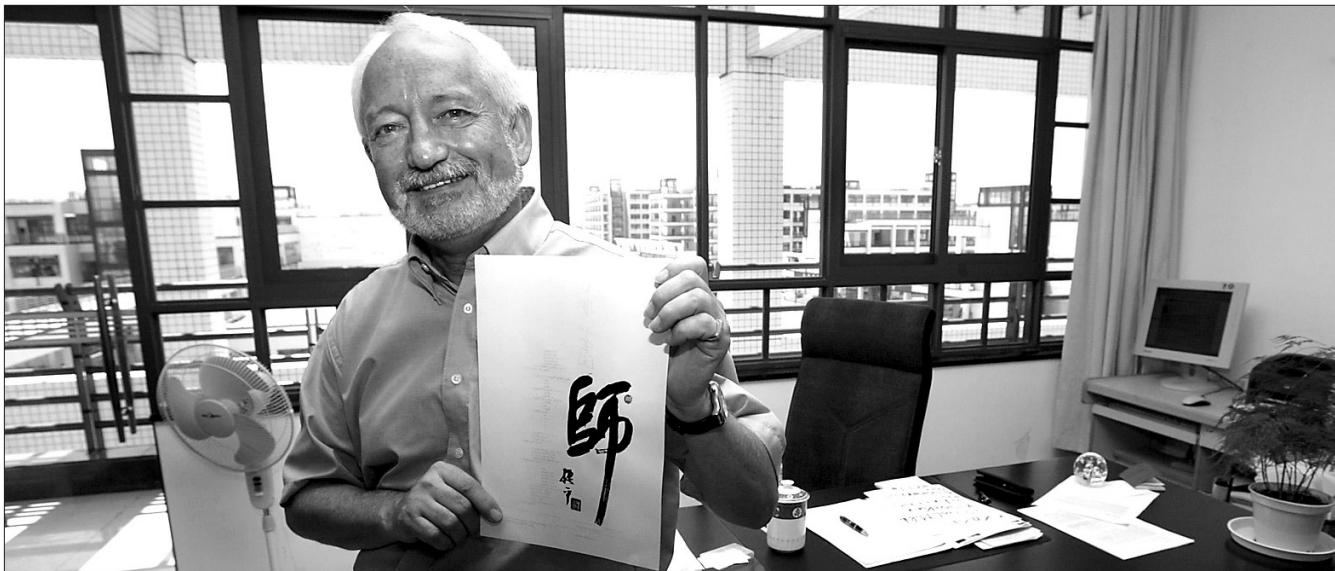
Do you mean legal taxis or taxis on the black market? Most taxis in Beijing charge 10 yuan for the first three kilometers, then jump to two yuan for every succeeding kilometer and every five minutes of sitting idle in traffic.

Not long ago, there were still taxis that charged 1.2 or 1.6 yuan for every kilometer beyond the first three. Now that not only have they been phased out but taxi rates have gone up, the black market taxi industry has boomed. However, it's advisable not to take any illegal taxis as they don't have any insurance for the passengers in case of an accident.

3. What's the penalty for dropping litter in public places?

On main streets like Wangfujing and those surrounding Tian'anmen, you can get fined for dropping litter. In most other places, there aren't a lot of people designated to catch those who litter.

(By Annie Wei)



Dr Ulrich Steinmuller, dean of the School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, shows calligraphy of the character Shi (teaching) in his office. The professor from Berlin, Germany, has been at the university since August 2003.

CFP Photo

Foreigners target Beijing jobs

By Huang Daochen

Over 400 foreign job seekers flocked to Beijing's Lama Temple Talent Market last Sunday, in the hopes of getting a career in China off the ground. Around 160 job openings were offered in the finance, education, medicine, information technology and media sectors.

The recruitment fair was set up especially for foreign students, and attracted 51 companies, including Hong Kong University and PepsiCo, said Li Xiaohong, business development manager of the event organizer China International Enterprises Cooperative Co.

Figures from Beijing's education authority show that there are currently around 40,000 foreign students in the capital. Most of those who want to work for foreign companies intend to remain in the city after finishing their studies. However, as a foreigner, getting employed in Beijing is not all that easy; apart from the actual job hunt, there are a wealth of formalities one has to go through.

Procedures

The employment of foreigners in Beijing, says the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, refers to

the act of hiring those who have not yet obtained the right of permanent residence and receiving remunerations for their work in accordance with Chinese laws.

Foreigners who have not obtained residence permits (holders of F, L, C and G visas), and who are studying or doing an internship in China, and dependents of foreigners holding a working visa cannot be legally employed in China. In special circumstances, a foreigner who is to be employed should have his visa status changed by his employer at the public security bureau. Then, the person should apply for a Foreigner's Employment Permit and Residence Permit before formally starting work.

An overseas person who intends to work in Beijing, on the other hand, should apply for a work visa with the necessary documents at a Chinese embassy or consulate. After the person enters China, the employer can apply for the Foreigner's Employment Permit at the Municipal Bureau of Labor and Social Security, bringing along the work visa, valid passport and residence permit.

Documents

The following documents are needed if you want to apply for a work visa:

- (1) Curriculum vitae
- (2) Employer's letter of intent
- (3) Reasons why the company needs to employ a foreigner
- (4) Proof of employee's skills and competence
- (5) Health certificate
- (6) Other related documents as prescribed by the Municipal Bureau of Labor and Social Security

Challenges to regulations

Employers and officials are calling for changes in the country's current employment and residency laws to allow foreign students to live and work in the country.

Demands from both employers and employees are challenging existing regulations that ban foreign students from part-time work in China, and grant work visas only after foreign students have gained work experience in their home country.

"We're calling for amendments to the old regulations, as well as to references pertaining to foreign employees' income levels and compensation packages," said Lin Fan,

an official in charge of foreign students' services at the Beijing Higher Education Society.

The government is now considering amending relevant provisions pertaining to the employment of foreigners, so stay tuned in case these changes are made.

Useful contacts

Beijing Municipal Bureau of Labor and Social Security

An office you need to be familiar with if you decide to live and work in Beijing.

Where: No 5 Yongnei Xi Lu, Xuanwu

Tel: 6316 7924

bjld.gov.cn

FESCO

For first-time job hunters, Beijing Foreign Enterprise Human Resources Service Co., Ltd. (FESCO) is a good place to start. FESCO is a leader in the Chinese human resource industry and provides consulting services on labor laws and relationships, as well as the newest recruitment information.

Where: No 14 Chaoyangmen Nan Dajie, Chaoyang

Tel: 8561 8888

fesco.com.cn

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By Enda Brogan

Chinese cinema is gaining increasing recognition abroad, as China's films show. China's latest successes were at the Cairo International Film Festival on December 5 and the Asia Festival of 1st Films (AFFF) in Singapore on December 6: Chinese director Zhang Jingchu won three awards at each event.

The AFFF, which recognizes the achievements of first-time directors, actors, and screenwriters, was dominated by Zhang's tale of love between a middle-aged bus driver and his young assistant. Two other Chinese films – Cheng Gong's *Don't Cry* and Sheng Zhimin's *Sheng Sheng* – also won accolades at the festival.

Chinese at international film festivals



Lao Cui (Fan Wei) and Chun Fen (Zhang Jingchu) marry in *The Road*.

CFP Photos

The Road

Released in China earlier this year, the film traces their emotionally repressed but devoted relationship through 40 years of Chinese history, starting in the Cultural Revolution era and ending in modern-day Yunnan province.

The Road scooped top AFFF honors in the Best Film, Best Screenplay and Foreign Press Purple Orchid award categories.

"This is our company's first feature film, so we're really happy to have won so many awards. We really weren't expecting it," Zhang Feng of Guangcai Film and Media, who accepted the Best Film award on behalf of director Zhang, said.

"This film is about the life and loves of a woman through 40 years of her life. It's about common people. We wanted to make a film

portraying China's culture and soul through the lives of simple people."

Hollywood screenplay writer, James V. Hart, who presented the Best Film award said, "*The Road* is really about co-existence, which at the end of the day is the only thing that can save us. Films such as these share culture, beliefs and desires, and show humanity you don't get on CNN or in the *New York Times*. As

long as filmmakers and artists keep making films that share and explore their cultures, we have a chance."

Two days later, the same film won the Golden Pyramid for Best Film at the Cairo Film Festival, while the Best Actress award went to the movie's heroine, Li Chunfen, played by a compelling Zhang Jingchu.

Comic actor Fan Wei, who played her bus-driving husband Lao

Cui, received the Special Mention prize, completing another hat trick of accolades for the 10-million yuan production.

While Zhang Jiarui is an accomplished director, *The Road* marks his debut as a producer and screenplay co-writer, which made the film eligible for entry into the AFFF.

This year's festival showcased 20 nominated feature films and docu-

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ine at international festivals. On September 8 and the Asian Film Festival, Jiarui's *The Road* won the Best Director award. The scriptwriters and producers, Jiarui and his attractive young wife, *Bliss* – also reaped



Chinese films shine at international festivals

IN
IVAL
FILMS



1 Poster for the Asian Festival of 1st Films

2 The prize cup issued for the Asian Festival of 1st Films

3 Zhang Jiarui, director of *The Road*

't Cry

Chinese films featured at the AFFF were Cheng Gong's *Don't Cry* and first time documentary director Cheng Gong's *Don't Cry* – the heartrending story of a cancer patient.

The director Cheng Gong's *Don't Cry* has similar themes, documenting the last days of a cancer patient's life.

35-year-old Beijinger spent four months on the documentary, recording 150 hours of video. He spent 50,000 yuan of his own funds on the project but never expected it to be shown at a festival.

"Initially afraid people would think I was taking advantage of someone's death to gain recognition, I know the deceased's family would feel sad if they saw the film or read about it in the media."

"The most important thing is that I actually film, not the end result," Cheng said.

"When making this film, I wanted audiences to see what I saw. Originally, I wanted to film five people at the Tongzhou hospice in eastern Beijing. The people dying there had no money and I ended up spending almost four months with people and we became very good friends." He is currently shooting a documentary, due to be released in February, about a Tibetan man who became an orphan. Also in the pipeline is a film about the third generation, who turned 30 this year.

"The beauty of a documentary is that you don't have distractions, unlike a feature film, but the most important thing is confidence, and you have to be sure you have to feel it from inside your heart."

mentaries, after drawing 320 entries from around the world.

Last year's Best Film winner, *The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros* has traveled to over a dozen festivals including Sundance and Berlin where it won three awards. It was also released in the US and has been selected as the Philippines' entry for this year's foreign-language Oscar.



Zhang Jingchu plays Chun Fen in *The Road*.

Bliss

Bliss explores China's recent social changes through the context of a newly formed family. The main character is Lao Li, a retired and remarried policeman who struggles to find harmony with both new and old family members. Set against the misty backdrop of Chongqing, the film deals with pain, hidden secrets and the struggle for hope.

Li tries to guide his new stepson away from a gang of delinquent friends and into a steady job, while at the same time trying to come to terms with his ex-wife's death. She ran off with a man from the North when Li's natural son Jian Jun was a young boy. Father and son grow closer as they face up to his mother's recent death and together seek a plot of land to bury her ashes. But Jian Jun has problems of his own: his marriage to the unattractive and unfaithful Xiao Hong is on the rocks, and things take a turn for the worse when she is diagnosed with a serious illness.

Beijing-born Sheng never went to film school; he learned his trade on the job, wearing the hats of assistant director, line producer, and script writer before making his directorial debut in 2003 with the movie *Two Hearts*.

"Movies have always been a dream of mine," Sheng said in a recent interview. "But for young people in China, making movies is not a very practical dream."

Sheng got his lucky break in 1997 when he got to help director-friend Zhang Yang shoot the romantic comedy *Spicy Soup*. He later worked with Fruit Chan on *Durian Durian* and *Public Toilet* and with Jia Zhangke on *Platform*.

Bliss is Sheng's second feature film, and features a number of first-time film actors. Among them, 53-year-old He Xingquan, who plays Lao Li, is a former police officer in real life and his onscreen wife Guan Jiangge is a member of the Chongqing City Opera. Both were nominated for best actor awards.

The inspiration for *Bliss* comes from Sheng's real life experience. A few years ago, several years after Sheng's mother had passed away, his father started looking for a graveyard plot to bury her ashes. Father and son visited dozens of cemeteries in the north of Beijing, but Sheng senior could not decide which to choose.

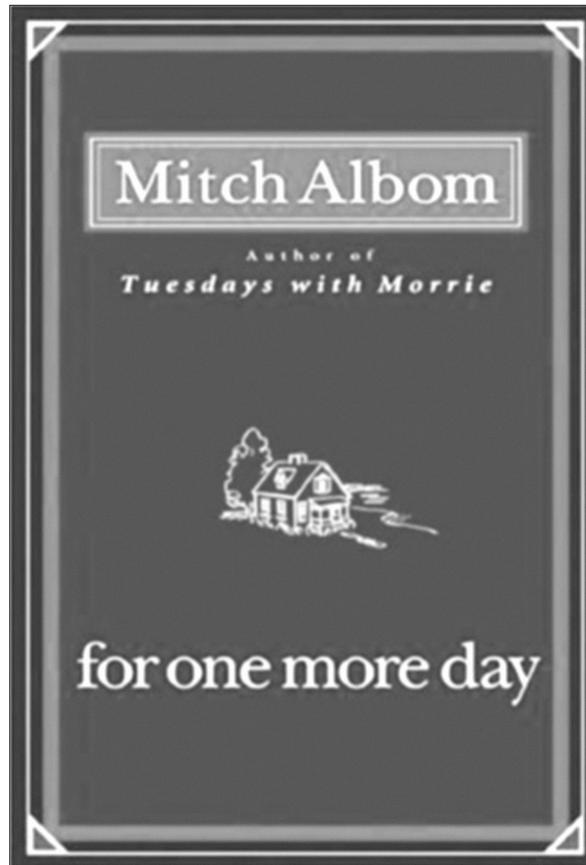
"Late one day, while we were looking at a graveyard near the Great Wall, my father told me he wanted to buy a larger grave, so the whole family could be buried together in the future."

"At that time I realized he was getting old, and that I too would die someday. This inspired me to make a movie that encompassed life all the way from youth to old age – a movie about life, youth and humanity."



By Mitch Albom
197pp, Hyperion, 157 yuan (Wangfujing Bookstore)

The author of *Tuesdays with Morrie* and *Five People You Meet in Heaven*, Mitch Albom, is once again on the bestseller lists with his latest novel *For One More Day*. This book deals with the basic question, What would you do if you had one more day with a person you've lost? The novel's protagonist is Charlie Chick Benetto, a middle-aged former baseball player who looks back at his life and sees himself as a failure – a failure in his career, in his marriage and as a father. After a failed suicide attempt, he goes back to his childhood home and there encounters the ghost of his mother, whose death still haunts him. In that one day, he gets an unexpected chance to find answers to questions he's always wanted to ask, and in the process, discover some unexpected things about himself, his family and what life's all about.



For One More Day

Reviewers Corner

The book's underlying theme, valuing the present and the people you have in your life, seems similar to Albom's previous books. How different is it really?

For One More Day is very similar to *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*. Same sort of characters, same sort of supernatural yet familiar setting, same "It's a Wonderful Life" type move from regret to peace with one's life. Albom does not break new ground here. That may be good or bad, depending on how much you like his previous work.

– **Erin Collazo Miller,**
Bestselling Books

How does this rate in comparison with his two previous books?

This wasn't my favorite book by this author, but no matter what he writes, he seems to always find a way to hit you in the heart in that very last chapter. I was wondering what he'd do this time to make me pull out that Kleenex box, and he did it yet again. I don't think the story is as wonderful as the previous *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, or the great *Tuesdays with Morrie*. But the lesson learned here is valuable.

– **Amazon.com reviewer**

Despite some critics' comments that Albom's books are sentimental and simplistic, they do not fail to strike a chord with readers. What's his secret?

There is something about the author's style that makes you feel as if you are not reading a story on a page, but having your dear friend sitting across from you in your living room, sitting in your favorite chair and telling you about something you have been desperate to hear. All of it feels right,

sounds right, maybe it is right.
– **Powell Books reviewer**

Is this mother-son story based on the author's own relationship with his mother?

Some of the chapters are based on actual events from the author's relationship with his own (still living) mother according to what he has said in interviews and in podcasts promoting the book. I think readers would have been better served had he planted them with a different, more personal narrative. The imagined story of a man in a hallucinatory stupor experiencing another ordinary day with his deceased mother comes across as a little corny and seems to disrespect the authentic feelings conjured up by the author's personal recollections.

– **Charles S. Houser,**
Amazon.com

For readers who aren't sure whether or not to get this book, what can win them over?

The core of the book's appeal is the deft way that Mr Albom captures the ambiguity many sons have towards the support they receive from their Mothers, while the Mothers are acting like the saints they often are. A good secondary appeal is the gradual exposure of deeply buried family secrets.

– **Donald Mitchell,**
Amazon.com

Author's Corner

You have critics who say your books are simplistic; your books are too sentimental. How do you respond to this?

I think there is something very true about something that is very simple. And I think there is something very true about things that are sentimental. I will never understand people who

criticize things that are sentimental because everybody's favorite song is a sentimental song, the one they heard at camp and fell in love for the first time. Everybody's favorite movie is not some murder, grisly thing. It's something that makes them cry at the end, "It's A Wonderful Life" or something like that. And everybody's last words are not ironic. Sometimes critics miss that because they are so wrapped up in trying to celebrate the obscure or something complex. Because they think that that's what makes them unique and better than everyone else. They miss the fact that most people are moved by very simple things. And unfortunately or fortunately for me, I've had a chance to meet more sick and dying people than most people will ever encounter in a life time. I can tell you something. They're not interested in irony. They're not interested in cynicism. They're interested in truth. They are interested in simple little sentences like "I love you" and like "Don't forget me."

– **Interview with AOL Books**

All your books talk about death or dying, why the big interest in this?

I guess the way I'd prefer to look at it is they're really about life. But death is the mirror. Because I'm not fascinated with people dying. But then all your readers start telling you those stories, and you start to think, Where's Morrie now, and is he in heaven? And the next thing you know you're writing about heaven, and then after that book, people start coming up to you and saying, "I read *The Five People*, and I really liked it, and boy, what I wouldn't give to have more time with one person." And somewhere along the line, I thought, "Well, there's probably a good story

there about if you had one day, how would you spend one day?"

– **Interview with Entertainment Weekly**

This book, like the others, elicited a lot of emotions from readers. What were some of the emotions going through you as you were writing it?

Even though (my mother's) still here, a lot of my emotion while I was writing was what's gonna happen when she's not, what's gonna happen when I can't pick up the phone and just say, "Hey mom" There's a sentence in the book that a lot of people have responded to – and I remember the day I wrote it and the sentence is when he first says to her, when he first sees her and he says the word "mom," and he thinks to himself, "It's been so long since I said that word." Because when death takes your mother, it steals that word forever. You never do utter that word again. You talk about your mother, but you never say it as a greeting pronoun "mom." You never call anyone else "mom." I was thinking at the time I wrote that, I had just hung up on a phone call with my mother. I thought, what happens when I can't pick up the phone and say, "Hi, mom" ... That's gonna be a sad day and that sort of sadness was in my mind when I wrote that page and that scene.

– **Interview with Bill Thompson's Eye on Books**

What message do you hope readers take with them after they finish this book?

My hope is that they read *For One More Day* and they are moved by it then they won't be one of those people who are walking around wishing for one more day. They'll take it right now.

– **Interview with AOL Books**
(By Tiffany Tan)

Local shelf

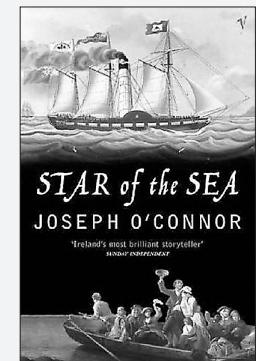
The Distant Land of My Father

By Bo Caldwell
Harvest Books, 400 pages, 105 yuan

The Distant Land of My Father is, above all, a tragic romance – albeit one with an unusual love interest. The book begins like a fairy tale, "My father was a millionaire in Shanghai in the 1930s ... On the day he was born, in the province of Shantung, neighbors presented my missionary grandparents, the only Americans for miles, with noodles in great abundance and one hundred chicken eggs, in honor of their son's birth."

To the young Anna Schoene, life in Shanghai is indeed magical. There are servants, a luxurious villa, a beautiful mother who smells like Chanel No 5, and a young, handsome, polo-playing father. Unfortunately, her father is also a smuggler and speculator who loves his free-wheeling life more than anything – or anyone – else. Despite warnings, Schoene refuses to leave Shanghai even after the Japanese invade, and his wife and child retreat to Los Angeles; later, he survives imprisonment and torture only to once again choose Shanghai over his family – this time with the Communists moving in.

The Star of the Sea



By Joseph O'Connor
Vintage, 432 pages, 120 yuan

Tragedy is a word too often used. Nevertheless, in *Star of the Sea*, Joseph O'Connor manages to achieve a real sense of the tragic, as personal dramas of the most distressing kind play out against the background of the Irish potato famine and the almost equal nightmare of the mass emigration it caused. As passengers die of starvation and disease in steerage (third class), a drama of adultery, inadvertent incest and inherited disease plays out in first class. O'Connor raises, and does not attempt definitively to answer, real questions about responsibility and choice.

Available:
Beijing Bookworm
Where: Building 4, Sanlitun Nan Jie, Chaoyang
Tel: 6586 9507
(By Han Manman)



Planning to go for broke to celebrate the holidays? Planning to hide because you're broke? This Christmas's festivities aren't only for the loaded; there's something in this city to fit everyone's budget. *Beijing Today* checked out three restaurants where you can enjoy good food and a good time with your family or friends, no matter how much cash you have – or don't have.

Three reasons to celebrate the season

Goodness in the air

By Gan Tian

Shanzhai, which means 'goodness' in Chinese, takes on a depth of meaning as a restaurant's name. First, it reflects the quality of food and service the restaurant aims to achieve. Second, it describes the place's main attraction – a gigantic ice sculpture of Buddha, which stands in the main hall and which gets replaced every day after it turns to water.

If you're looking for a place with a lively atmosphere to get together with friends, Shanzhai is a good choice. One of their best-sellers among foreigners is Beef-steak Toasted in the Iron Net. The server recommended that I eat it without seasoning to highlight the meat's taste.

Iron Platter Five Grain Rice is a quick dish, arriving only a few minutes after you've ordered. As its name suggests, it contains five grains: rice, panic grass, panic millet, wheat and peas. It reminded me of fast food, which can be good or bad depending on your preferences, but is definitely more nutritious.

The most interesting thing on their menu is Black Baozi (a kind of steamed stuffed bun). Made with black flour and with meat filling, it's sweeter than your ordinary baozi and leaves you with a smile.

At last, I must mention that someone made a funny comment about the restaurant, "If you love her, take her to Shanzhai, as it's a good place to propose; if you don't love her, take her to Shanzhai, as the lights will blind you to anything but the food on the table."

Shanzhai

Where: F/2 North Tower, Rainbow Plaza, No 16 Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang

Open: 10am-11pm

Tel: 6595 1199

Cost: 100 yuan per person



Shanzhai's BBQ

Photo provided by Shanzhai

Dine European-style



Chef Simon shows his dish.

Photos by Tian Yufeng

By Chu Meng

This holiday season, the French Bistro at The Great Wall Sheraton Hotel is doing a double celebration. The restaurant is welcoming a new chef from Europe, plus it's offering a whole array of new dishes in addition to its seafood specialties.

It's new chef, Simon, is a young and shy German, but his culinary skills allow him to communicate with people of various languages without him needing to utter a word. He has a degree from Germany-based Chocolate Academy, and has worked for a Gault Millau top-ranked establishment and a two-Michelin-star restaurant. His expertise has also taken him to England, Austria, Spain and Switzerland.

Simon defines his cuisine as very classic French with a touch of Mediterranean influence. His new menu features goose liver, delicate sole and monkfish, exquisite prime rib beef and a variety of cheese.

A three-course light lunch is his Christmas season recommendation. To start, you can get



An ideal sweet dish for Christmas

marinated salmon with dill and orange to give your palate a delicate wake-up call. One of the main course choices is baked deer meat, soaked in sweet chestnut paste and garnished with red berry and chocolate sauce. The chef said the color and sugary taste will awaken your festive feelings, but to me, it was more a reminder of Santa's reindeer.

The dessert is the best part of the meal: a traditional French dessert of orange cream pudding topped with baked caramel powder.

The grilled beef and lamb with mushroom sauce is also worth a try. If you're on a date with a lady, for dessert, pick the thin pancakes with brandy and orange sauce and homemade cheese pudding, and win her heart.

French Bistro

Where: 1/F, Great Wall Sheraton Hotel, 10 Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang

Open: Monday-Friday: 11:45am-2pm, 6pm-10:30pm; Weekends: 6pm-10:30pm

Tel: 6590 5566

Cost: 400 yuan per person

Common people's treasure

By Tiffany Tan

Literally meaning 'the people's treasure,' Minbao Huoguo calls itself the 'first hotpot for common people.' This might just be a marketing slogan, but there's rationale behind it.

According to the restaurant, their mutton comes from Inner Mongolia, while beef is supplied by an established name in the local meat industry. The Special Mutton and Special Beef are offered at 5 yuan all year round, almost 30 percent off the standard price.

Some of the other most popular ingredients are: fish meat balls (20 yuan), sliced brisket pork (15 yuan), crab fillet (6 yuan), bamboo shoots (12 yuan), fresh mushroom (8 yuan), fried tofu skin (8 yuan), Sheets of Starch noodles (5 yuan) and iced tofu (4 yuan).

Once you're seated, you get your own pot, and a choice of either mildly flavored or spicy (further divided into extra spicy or mildly spicy) broth. What makes it stand out, however, is its *majiang*, a sesame paste hotpot dip. "It's fragrant," commented one first-time customer. A bowl of *majiang* is one yuan, with an unlimited number of refills, and – drinks are free! You can choose among *suanmeitang* or plum juice, beer or *baijiu*.

Located a stone's throw away from Haidian district's university area, Minbao is popular among foreign students. The place is always packed, even at odd hours. You should make reservations, because the place fills fast. For every 100 yuan you spend, you get a lunch voucher worth 30 yuan.

Minbao Huoguo Cheng

Where: 8 Huayuan Donglu, Haidian

Open: 9:30am-11pm

Tel: 8203 3355; 8203 6598; 6679 6395

Cost: 25-30 yuan per person



Minbao's hotpot

Photo by Tiffany Tan

Next issue will tell you three other restaurants where you can have a romantic night with your honey.

Free shoes

Spend over 88 yuan at Vero Moda in Lan Dao building (8 Chaoyangmen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang) and get a free pair of shoes. For details, call 8561 7838.



Men's wear at 40 percent off

Playboy brand men's wear at Lan Dao building (8 Chaoyangmen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang) are sold at 40 percent discount until December 17. For details, call 8561 7838.



Shopping at reduced price

Spend over 200 yuan at Pacific Plaza (2 Gongti Bei Lu, Chaoyang) and get 80 yuan off your purchases. For details, call 6539 3888.



Voucher worth 168 yuan

Spend over 150 yuan at Wu Mart Plaza (18 Beisanhuan Zhong Lu, Haidian) and get a voucher worth 168 yuan until December 19. For details, call 6209 1515.

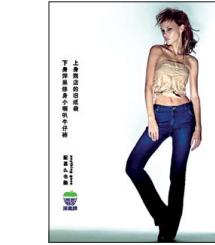


Shoes at 30 percent off



Selected items at Hush Puppies in Xi Dan shopping center (132 Xidan Bei Dajie, Xicheng) are 30 percent off the original price until December 17. For details, call 6602 5016.

Clothes at half price



Shop for Texwood clothes in Modern Plaza (40 Zhongguancun Dajie, Haidian) and pay only half the standard price. Offer good until December 17. For details, call 6257 6688.

A fifth off watches



Citizen watches are 20 percent off at Xi Dan shopping center (132 Xidan Bei Dajie, Xicheng). For details, call 6602 5016.

Suits at 10 percent off



Dunhill's suits are 10 percent off at Xi Dan shopping center (132 Xidan Bei Dajie, Xicheng) until December 15. For details, call 6602 5016.

Discounted cashmere clothes



Lotus cashmere clothes at Xi Dan shopping center (132 Xidan Bei Dajie, Xicheng) are 20-50 percent off until December 16. For details, call 6602 5016.

Tailor-made clothes at a discount



Visit Kwun Kee Tailors and get 32 percent off your orders until December 15. For details, call 6602 5016.

(By Terrence Lu)

Sporting goods at 30 percent off

Selected Mizuno sporting goods at Xidan Shopping center (120 Xidan Bei Dajie, Xicheng) are now 30 percent off the regular price. For details, call 6656 5800.



Gems at 70 percent off

Zhou Da Sheng's Jewels at Xi Dan shopping center (132 Xidan Bei Dajie, Xicheng) are 70 percent off the tag price until December 15. For details, call 6602 5016.



Free scarf

Spend over 500 yuan at Chrysos Jewels in Jian Yuan Yan Sha Plaza (Yuandu, Haidian) and get a scarf for free. For details, call 8887 4691.



Latin food at special price

Sample Latin food at Caribbean restaurant (28 Dongzhimen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang) for only 298 yuan per person. Latin music played while you dine. For reservations, call 6417 2201.



Free beer



Enjoy free beer at Xiao Ku Fan Qie hot pot restaurant (248 Luotuowan Lu, Sanluju, Haidian) beginning December 7. For details, call 6349 7030.

Half-priced pizza



All pizzas at Mr Pizza restaurant (26 Pufang Lu, Fangzhuang, Chaoyang) are sold at half price until December 17. For details, call 8768 3242.

Down coat discount



Get a Bosideng down coat in Modern Plaza (40 Zhongguancun Dajie, Haidian) and get a 20-25 percent discount until December 15. For details, call 6257 6688.

30 percent off



Columbia outdoor clothing are 30 percent off at Xi Dan shopping center (132 Xidan Bei Dajie, Xicheng) until December 17. For details, call 6602 5016.

Send us your discounts & offers.

Email us: bjtoday@ynet.com

or call: 6590 2626

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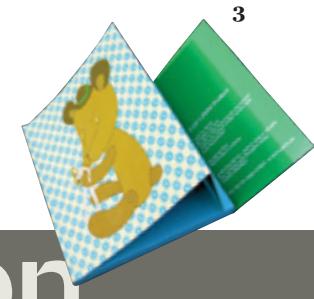
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“Guerrilla Shop”: next station in Beijing

By He Jianwei

UniversalSHOPS, a traveling design project initiated by UniversalStudios-beijing that incorporates the works of over twenty artists, designers, musicians and illustrators, focuses on China-related products. It incorporates more artists as it evolves, and will be stationed in various venues throughout the world.

The show was held in London in October, and will be displayed in Madrid, Amsterdam and Oslo next year, Qian Jing, assistant curator of UniversalStudios-beijing, says.

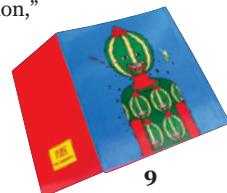
About the UniversalSHOPS

The hall of UniversalStudios-beijing looks more like an open market than a studio. Neon lights spelling “UNIVERSALSHOP” and colorful banners hang from the ceiling in a hall piled full of cardboard boxes. Samples of the toys, notebooks and CDs on sale are priced and displayed in the dim glow.

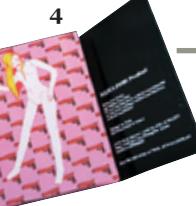
UniversalSHOPS features a series of “Guerrilla Shops,” an idea reminiscent of the street vendors who work around and beyond the limits of the law. The shops take the ‘everything plus the kitchen sink’ approach of street sales, and, like their counterparts, most items will be priced at under 100 yuan, Qian said.

“The idea for the UniversalSHOPS project is to present an interactive exhibition that seeks to recreate the energy, dynamism and deviance of China’s vibrant street culture. UniversalSHOPS also highlights the need for a new negotiation of social life and space in which the gap between art and public is increasingly blurred. By presenting the works as multiples against a backdrop of boxes, the exhibition also examines issues of consumerism and cultural production,” Pi Li, curator and independent critic of UniversalStudios-beijing, says.

A virtual shop on the Internet is open at shop34108058.taobao.com.



9



5



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Three recommended products

Hung Tanglu’s sculptures

Hung Tanglu’s sculptures are one of the most recommended products, partly because of their limited quantities.

Hung is part of the “new humans,” a Taiwan equivalent of the West’s ‘Generation X.’ He grew up immersed in *anime* and global pop culture icons.

Each of his sculptures, priced at 1,200 yuan, bears his signature and its casting number. One of his sculpture is of Chun-Li, a female fighter from CAPCOM’s *Street Fighter II*.

PERK

Jin Ningning and Si Wei established PERK Art Studio in September 2004. PERK’s Chinese name, ‘Po Ke,’ means to break through a shell.

“PERK has a hard shell with an ordinary appearance, but within that is a unique inner world and life. We try to communicate our passions and through different materials,” Jin said.

Their designs range from cartoons to toys, and from installation to fashion. They opened “PERK” in Shanghai to sell their works.

In UniversalSHOPS, PERK shows its notebooks, bags and clothes. “Most of our designs are based on our drawings, and most of our drawings reflect what we dream about and what we understand about the world outside,” Jin said.

“Goodbye, the summer” is PERK’s series of notebooks and T-shirts. It launched the series late last summer. “We

adopted bright colors and childish images, because we believe the summer is a season full of bright colors, and the end of the summer is the end of childhood,” Jin said.

Jin believes this kind of program is a good way for artists to communicate. “This multi-mode communication with people and clients will help promote sales and generate new artistic ideas,” she said.

Buyers can purchase PERK products in their Shanghai store at No 271 Fuxing Xi Lu, Shanghai, or order by phone from 021 5465 2879.

UNMASK

Three graduates of the China Academy of Fine Arts, Kuang Jun, Tan Tianwei and Liu Zhan, established Unmask, an art group, in 2002 to concentrate their work in sculpture.

In the UniversalSHOPS, they have two cotton toys named “I U.” When you say “I U,” it sounds like the Chinese word for “whoops.” The toys are naked except for scars and hair.

“We hope people will notice the markings on the body – they are traces of life that give each doll a unique character. Each hair and scar has its own story and passion,” Kuang said.

“When I look at the toy, I feel like its body is my own. The hairs and scars reflect my own. Maybe others will feel sad, but that’s why it’s a creative product – because it can inspire different feelings in people,” Kuang said.

For the mass production of “I U,” the smallest toy stands at 60cm and is priced at 300 yuan. The largest is as tall as an adult, but it’s not for sale.

1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10 PERK’s “Goodbye, the summer”, photos provided by PERK

5 Unmask’s “I U” toy, photo provided by Unmask

6, 8 Liu Wei’s Porcelain works, photos by Yang Dawei

7 Hung Tanglu’s sculpture, photo by Yang Dawei

11 Fu Jie’s Ballon, photo by Yang Dawei

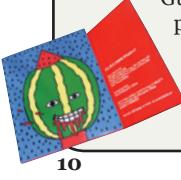
Others exhibited

Hong Kong-born artist Fu Jie will display CDs and her consumer-influenced handbag, suitcase and slippers.

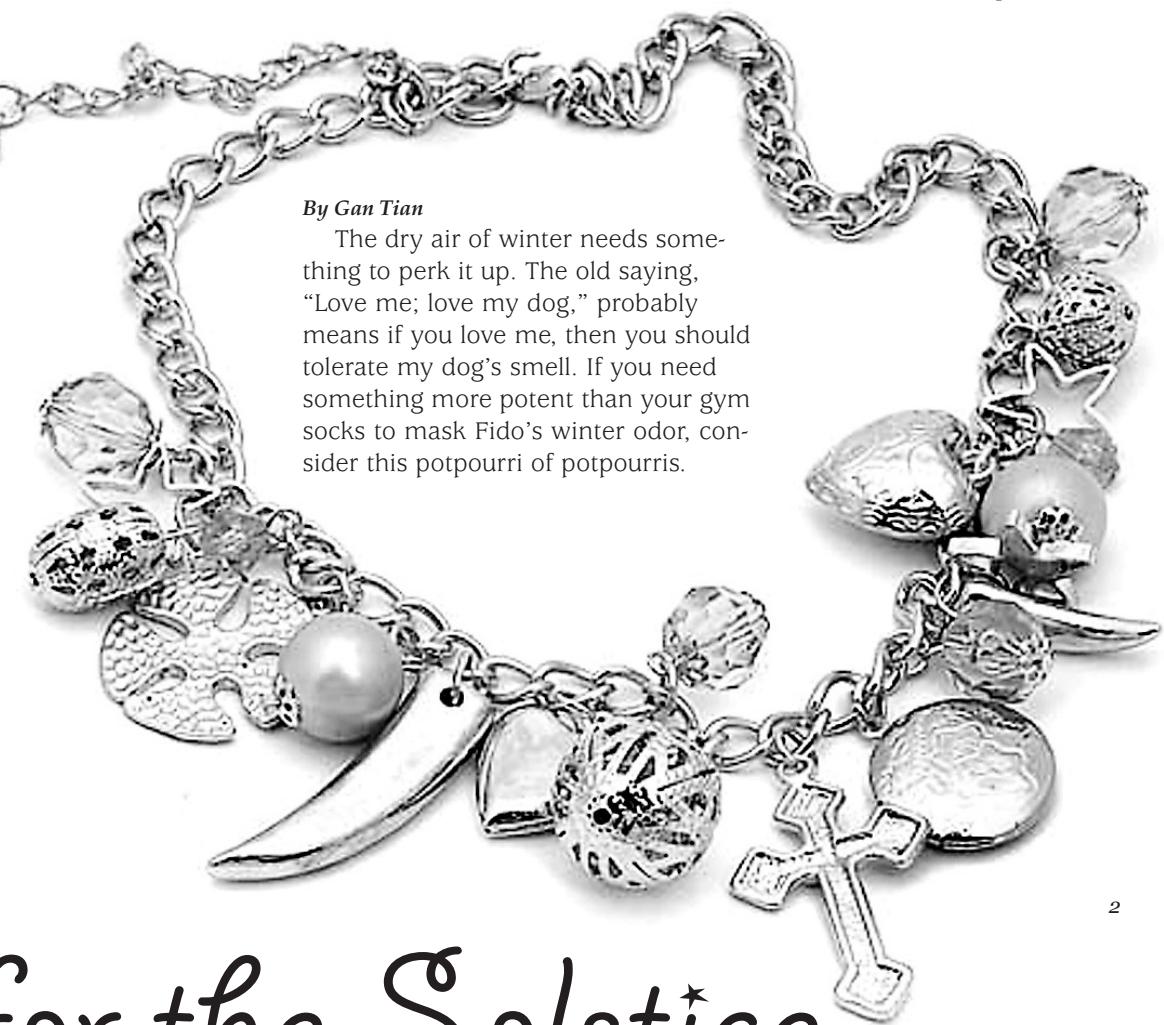
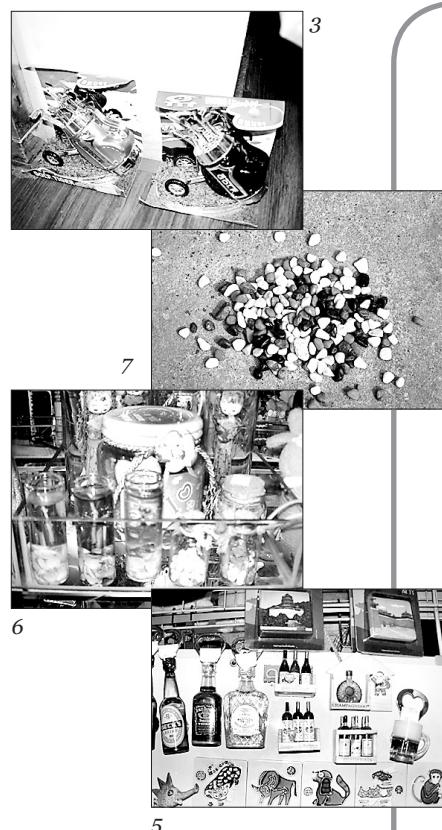
Beijing residents Liu Wei and Jiang Zhi will show multiple ceramics and ‘golden cups’.

Music critic and poet Yan Jun and friends will sell a range of CDs, while Zheng Guogu will offer gold and silver printed mats.

ShanghaiTang Yan, Ji Ji, [L + W] (Liu Qing and Wang Ting), WZL (Wang Yuwei) will show a range of designer toys.



10



By Gan Tian

The dry air of winter needs something to perk it up. The old saying, "Love me; love my dog," probably means if you love me, then you should tolerate my dog's smell. If you need something more potent than your gym socks to mask Fido's winter odor, consider this potpourri of potpourris.

Scents for the Solstice



Scents for your person

1 Jasmine-scented mobile phone decoration

It is only as big as a toenail, but it certainly smells. A bottle of wishes, jasmine perfume inside, messages from your girlfriend ... it all seems so perfect – except it will break if you squeeze too tightly. The bottles also come in rose, lilac and lily scents.

Available: QQ shop, 100m north of Beijing Forestry University's east gate

Price: 5-10 yuan

2 Lilac necklace

A lilac-scented necklace? I wonder how long the smell will last – but I'm a big boy and can't wear such a girly necklace. This isn't a promotion, but for all the girls reading this, try it and let me know how long it lasts. I'll reward you.

Available: joyo.com

Price: 258 yuan, 58 yuan (Joyo member price)

For the love shack

3 Scented golf bag

The shop owner opened the cover and I found pieces of ugly, yet pleasant smelling tree bark inside. Must be for

a boy's room!

Imagine what people

would say if they saw a floral bag in a boy's room. "You're such a freak!" But with something as 'manly' as a golf bag, you can rest assured this won't happen.

Available: Hello Shop, No 52 Xisi Bei Dajie, Xicheng

Price: 40 yuan

4 Fragrant candles

These candles are a new IKEA product specially designed for winter. They come in heart, tree, angel and flower shapes, but all of them smell great in your bedroom. Mmm ... I hope these candles can bring me a Merry Christmas!

Available: IKEA, No 59 Futongdong Dajie, Northwest corner of Siyuan Qiao, Chaoyang

Price: 9.9-39 yuan

Masking culinary misadventures



5 Wine bottle air freshener

Once upon a time there was a princess who found a prince. After they were married, she turned into a desperate housewife who had to

cook for her husband every day. One day, her husband couldn't stand her cooking any more; the food stunk so bad nothing could overpower its reek except this magical air freshener.

Available: Hello Shop, No 52 Xisi Bei Dajie, Xicheng

Price: 40 yuan

6 Fragrant bottles

These bottles are full of flowers and medicinal herbs. Put them in your kitchen to perk up the room's aroma – just don't confuse them with the oil or salt shakers!

Available: Hello Shop, No 52 Xisi Bei Dajie, Xicheng

Price: 40 yuan

Overpowering Beijing air

7 Colorful stones

The shop owner told me these stones are for lining the bottom of a fish jar, but one whiff of their aroma and I decided to recommend them here. Put them in your car and imagine you're fish swimming through Beijing's ocean of traffic.

Available: No 43, B/1, 77th Street, Xidan, Xicheng

Price: 20 yuan a bag

8 Fragrant bag

"Sleeping in my car – I will undress you; sleeping in my car – I will caress you; staying in the back seat of my car making love," goes Roxette's song. Yes! A hot guy in the back seat of your car is just the thing to warm you up! Just keep a window cracked or the neighbors may find it out.

Available: Hello Shop, No 52 Xisi Bei Dajie, Xicheng

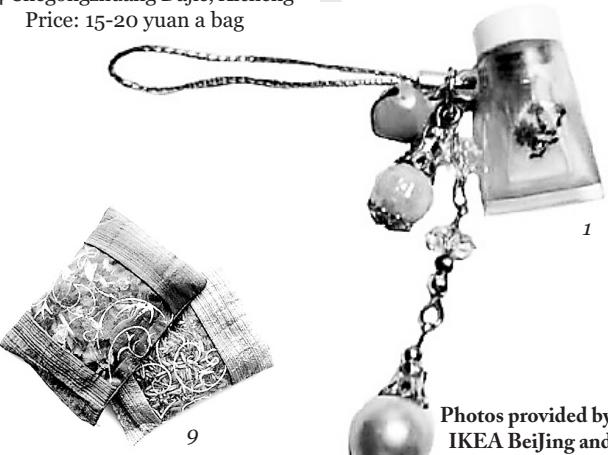
Price: 10 yuan

9 Dried petals

If you get bored with your lover, scatter some dried petals about your car and turn it into a honeymoon bed. You'll feel like you're getting married again every time! Just not with different people – they always smell the same.

Available: A56, F/4, Guanyuan Shopping Market, No 4 Chegongzhuang Dajie, Xicheng

Price: 15-20 yuan a bag



Photos provided by
IKEA Beijing and
Gan Tian

By Derrick Sobodash

When Shakespeare penned "Eye of newt and toe of frog, wool of bat and tongue of dog," he may not have realized his spooky ingredients sounded suspiciously like those found hanging in overseas Chinese herbal medicine (CHM), or zhongyao, shops. However, with China's standardization of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), root of hemlock and gall of goat have been swapped for pills and powders laowai on their first hospital visit may find easier to swallow.

What you should know about CHM

— Chinese herbal medicine in a westerner's eyes

Unlike Western medicine, which focuses on treating a patient's disease, TCM views illness as the result of an underlying problem of balance in the body's systems – a little similar to the medieval four humors system, but not executed by an infamous barber of York.

Rather than targeting disease, TCM attempts to restore the body to proper balance and relies on the immune system to do the rest of the work.

In TCM, the body is viewed as having five *zang*, or organ

'networks': the Liver, Lung, Spleen, Heart and Kidney. Each network is believed to be in charge of many body functions. The Lung, for example, is in charge of *qi* and respiration, and controls skin and hair condition.

A network is considered to have a problem when it is too hot or too cold and out of balance with another organ network. TCM attempts to restore the balance through herbs, massage, acupuncture, *qigong* meditation and other treatments.

Because patients with the same illness may exhibit different symptoms, it's common to see two TCM prescriptions for the same cold.

Herbal origins

Like Western herbal medicine, passed down through generations before every cure came in blister-sealed pills, CHM developed as a response to ailments afflicting the region. It even uses some of the same ingredients, such as licorice, an ingredient still found in many modern expectorants.

"China has been bombarded with a lot of diseases, and this (CHM) grew out of their (Chinese people's) use of herbs and natural plants to treat diseases," says Wayi Manabat, 35, a Beijing University of Traditional Medicine student interning at the Sino-Japanese Hospital.

CHM gets its ingredients from natural

plants, unlike Western medicine, which uses many synthetic additives which may not be good for the body, she says.

"In terms of effects, in terms of treatment and trying to relieve symptoms, sometimes it's as quick as Western medicine – but not always," she says.

Study of the herbs used in CHM has led to the development of new drugs in Western medicine.

Plants like *ma huang* are known to contain ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, a common decongestant in over-the-counter cold medicine; Chinese wormwood is the source for artemisinin, the compound used to treat some multi-drug resistant strains of malaria.

Successful treatment

CHM is successful at treating a variety of conditions, some of which may leave Western doctors scratching their heads as to how.

An *Gong Niu Huang Wan* (AGNHW), a famous Chinese medicine, has a history of use as a first aid, Xue Liangui, an engineer of pill preparation methods for Beijing-based Tongrentang, says.

"AGNHW is a common CHM for first aid. It's most useful for treating cerebral stroke, especially the resulting paralysis on one side of the body, called hemiplegia, and also for comas accompanied by high temperature," he says.

Xue recalls the case of Phoenix TV host Liu Hairuo, who was severely injured in England. Back in Beijing, Western doctors determined she was braindead and couldn't be treated because of her fever. The fever faded and she regained consciousness soon after being fed several AGNHW.

Exporting health

While the US has been slow to embrace TCM, it has become extremely popular through out Europe. The UK has as many as 3,000 TCM clinics and its citizens spend 90 million pounds on TCM yearly. Xue says the exported medicines aren't exactly the same as what you'll find in China, but they're pretty close.

The ore cinnabar is used extensively throughout CHM. "However, because it contains mercury, many countries prohibit its use as an ingredient," Xue says.

But swapping one ingredient rarely changes a prescription's effectiveness.

"Prescriptions in TCM are rather flexible. Most ingredients have some equivalent that can be substituted – just in a different quantity. Even the same medicines may have different ingredients when produced by different companies," Xue says. He says CHM for export is just as effective.

And that list of substitutes is long. The American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine has a list of nearly 40 herbs for 15 conditions traditionally treated using tiger bone. Synthetic versions of the controversial bear bile are also available, and many doctors consider them just as good.

"Of course, there may be some truly minute difference, but most of the time it's just the opposite of the placebo effect," he says.



Controversial ingredients

Despite its benefits, CHM has had the misfortune to inherit a dubious reputation due to its past questionable ingredients. Among the more infamous are rhino horn and tiger bone – there's no tiger-friendly way of harvesting tiger bone.

According to the World Wildlife Fund, as few as 6,000 tigers remained alive in the wild in 2005. Three species of tiger were wiped out in the last century, and the South China tiger is facing extinction with as few as 30 remaining in the wild: compare to China's 1,600 pandas in the wild.

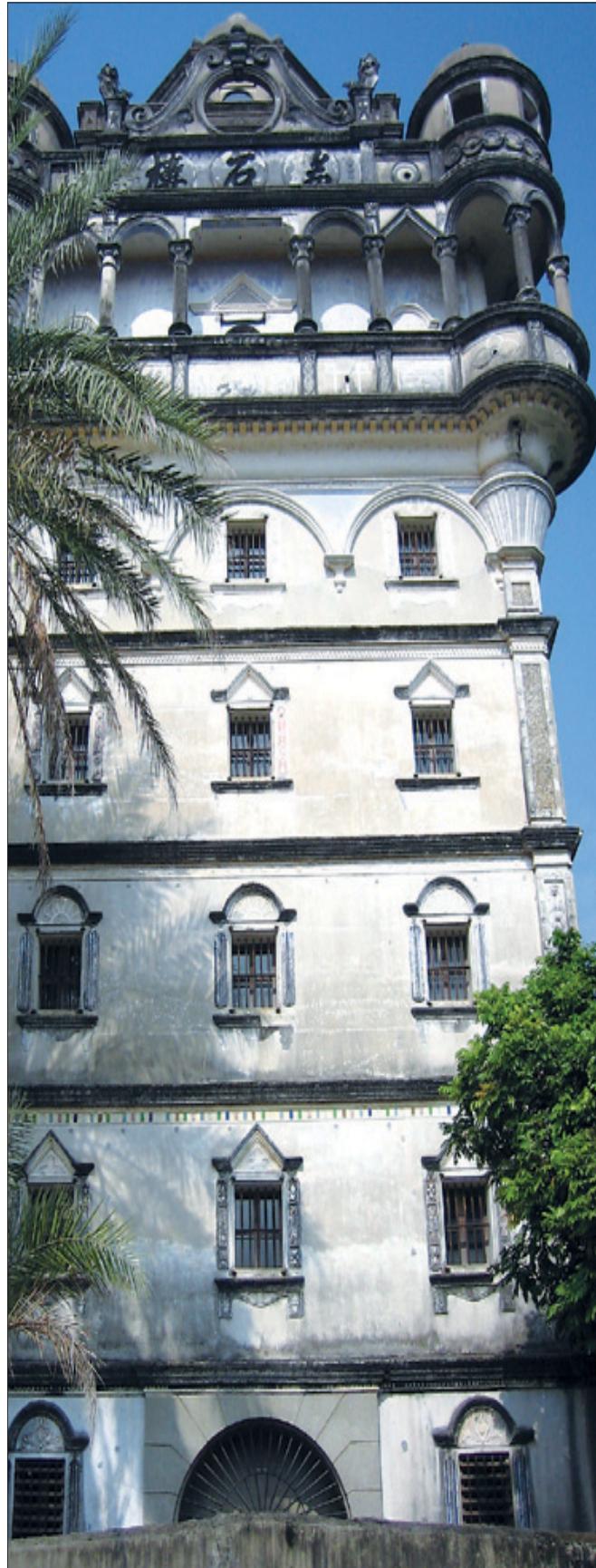
Despite being a level-1 protected animal in China – the same level as the panda – tigers are still at risk for poaching. According to TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, demand for tiger bone fell in the 1990s, but an underground market for tiger bone and skin remains.

Black rhinoceroses have also been poached for their horns, a prized ingredient in the traditional AGNHW. Since 1970, as many as 98 percent of the world's black rhino have been killed for their horns.

However, Chinese medicines prepared by major manufacturers don't use such ingredients, Xue says. "Since 1995, in order to protect rare, wild animals, rhino horns have been forbidden as an ingredient in Chinese medicine. Nowadays, AGNHW uses a substitute of 20 parts water buffalo horn for one part rhino horn," he says.

The same substitute can be made in other prescriptions calling for rhino horn. Xue says the effect is pretty much the same, but the domesticated animal makes a safe substitute for the endangered rhino.

Kaiping:



Ruishi Lou

Photos by Maja Linnemann

Modern Castles in the Land of Dim Sum

By Maja Linnemann

They aren't as old as the Mogao grottos of Dunhuang or as popular as Pingyao – but the *diaolou* of Kaiping in Guangdong Province are still a fascinating site to visit. The government of Kaiping has even applied for “UN World Cultural Heritage” status. Winter travelers will also enjoy the south's pleasant weather, green trees and blossoming flowers.

I traveled to Kaiping during the four-day 2006 New Year holiday. After a pleasant day in Guangzhou and an uneventful last evening of the year, my friends and I took an early bus to Kaiping on January 1. The trip took less than two hours.

Kaiping is so special because of its fortified, multi-story, gray edifices, called *diaolou*, which vaguely resemble medieval castles. The *diaolou* are classified according to their main functions: night watch towers, residential towers and communal towers. Today, 1,833 of the 3,000 *diaolou* built are still standing, although they remain in scattered states of conservation or neglect.

History

This region of Guangdong has always had a high rate of emigration. One major wave to Canada and the US started in the 1800s, as workers were needed for mining and railway construction. When the Chinese emigrants saved some wealth overseas, they returned home or sent money to their families to build a *diaolou*. The peak period of *diaolou* construction was in the 1920s and 30s. A few are more than 400 years old, and the newest dates 1948.

The styles of the *diaolou* vary greatly. As the emigrants went overseas, the styles of their new homes influenced the styles of their *diaolou*. They combine Greek, Roman, Gothic, Baroque, Muslim, Southeast Asian and traditional Chinese elements. The most recent *diaolou* were built with modern, imported materials such as steel and reinforced concrete. After the residents became affluent, their wealth attracted bandits and required new *diaolou* to be fortified.

In Kaiping, a detailed map with all the sights is available at the local Xinhua bookshop. As the places of interest are scattered, it's a good idea to rent a car for a day or two. Of course, the flat terrain makes it easy for travelers with enough time to explore by bike.

‘Must-see’ sights

Although the *diaolou* are everywhere, there are a few ‘must see’: Zili Village in Tankou township, Ruishi Lou in Jinjiangli of Xianggang township and Chikan.

Zili village is famous for a cluster of several well-preserved *diaolou*. Two of the buildings offer a glimpse on how people lived 80 years ago. Traditional Chinese furniture is mixed with Western style objects and appliances – like a gramophone and a sea trunk marked with the label of a San Francisco shipping company.

On the first floor, there is usually a kitchen and a reception room. Stairs run up on one side of the building and lead to the living quarters. Apparently, each of the owner's wives was assigned one floor to share with her children. The top floor houses the ancestral shrine and features an open terrace-like space or a colonnade.

To encourage tourism, the local government encourages owners or their descendants to open them to the public. This is not always easy, because many live abroad and are difficult to locate. One of the two open *diaolou* was locked for decades until only two months ago, and there's still one locked for which no key can be found. Nobody knows what's inside.

On the second day we visited Ruishi Lou, one of the most beautiful and impressive *diaolou*, built in 1921 and nine stories high. The guide, a distinguished middle-aged gentleman, turned out to be the original builder's grandson. He was friendly, but it was difficult for us to understand the local dialect.

A riverside town

Chikan is a relaxed town on the banks of a small river. The town was once dominated by two families: the Guan family and the Situ family. They financed construction of the commercial houses, which are built in a southern European style, and also two libraries. Walking around Chikan feels like walking through an old black and white picture postcard. The place has a very romantic atmosphere.

In Kaiping, we stayed at the Sanbu Harbour View Hotel. It offered a full Dim Sum breakfast with bamboo trays full of shrimp and pork *jiaozi*, sweet rice cakes and pastries. Most guests seemed to be locals on holiday, which made the experience more authentic and less touristy.



The commercial street in Chikan



The roof of Ruishi Lou



Diaolou are rarely open today.

Transportation:

Bus service from Guangzhou to Kaiping from the Guangdong Provincial Long Distance Bus Station, west of the railway station, and Guangzhou Zhongshan Balu Long Distance Bus Station every 35 minutes, 6:30am-7:30pm; 1.5 hours.

Accommodations:

Three Star Sanbu Harbour View Hotel has rooms with a river view at 250 yuan and cheaper ones facing the backyard. Visit kpshvhotel.com.cn or call 075-0238 8888 for reservations.



Zili Diaolou inside



A distant view of Diaolou



Christmas Carnival 2006 @ Days Hotel & Suites Beijing and Regal Palace Theatre Restaurant

A+A Purple Wonderland

Sit back in our A+A Restaurant filled with romance and cheerfulness and enjoy a lovingly prepared set dinner boasting classical turkey, French goose liver, dainty venison. Lucky draws are arranged during the dinner.

After dinner, step into another celebrative spot A+A Club enhanced by live band music and 360-degree night view, and taste

Christmas cocktail and delicate Gluehwine.

Venue: 26th Floor, A+A Restaurant & Club

Time: 6:30pm-1am, December 24

Set Ticket: 1,388 yuan net, for two persons with one night accommodation in a Superior Room.

Additional benefits per set ticket:

688 yuan net for 3rd person; or 288 yuan net for one child from 3-12

Regal Palace Splendid Gala Night

Beijing's only Las Vegas-type entertainment palace presents a spectacular entertainment show by an exclusive performance crew, highlighted with dazzling lighting and gallant costume. A generous buffet features well-selected seafood, signature international cuisines as well as a gourmet island of desserts. Chef on site is ready to serve the mouthwatering roasted turkey. Various fun

games as well as grand lucky draws.

Venue:

Regal Palace Theatre Restaurant

Time: 7:30pm-12:30pm, December 24

Price: 988 yuan net for VIP seating; 888 yuan net for regular seating; 488 yuan net for one child under 12

Booking Hotline:

6773 1234 ext 3930 or
8778 9888 ext 222



From left to right: a monument in Kathmandu, a native woman in celebration, a temple in the Buddha country, a perfect mixture, and the kids in Marigold garlands

Nepal: ancient kingdoms and beyond

By Jane Ram

Sandwiched between China and India, Nepal, one of the world's smallest countries, is among the richest in attractions. Nepal is home to many World Heritage sites, unsullied scenic beauty, eight of the world's 10 highest snow-capped mountains and seemingly endless biodiversity.

Even amidst its natural marvels, Nepal has all the trappings of modern tourism: luxury accommodations, spas and fascinating shopping without a designer label in sight.

If you head for Nepal, set aside three days to explore three very different 'living museums': the ancient kingdoms of the Kathmandu Valley. Millions of years ago, this 565-square-kilometer region was a lake; when the water dried up, it left fertile, red soil where rice and vegetables flourish. Local stone and clay are red and lend a rosy glow to all the structures that intensifies in daylight.

In medieval times, the region's rulers were immensely rich, thanks to their taxes on all goods passing between India and Tibet. Much of the money was spent on the finest workmanship and materials in hundreds of palaces, temples and shrines – both Buddhist and Hindu, depending on the ruler of the day. These places have miraculously survived the ravages of weather, earthquakes and modern-era wear and tear. Worshippers fill them with color and life, as they light incense and offer flowers and food to the deities who are still believed to rule every aspect of daily life.

Kathmandu

Nepal's capital abounds with intriguing and beautiful buildings. Bouddhanath, Kathmandu's largest stupa, is the city's best-known icon. Pilgrims flock to circle the central stupa, to turn prayer wheels. Bouddhanath's cafés and small shops sell everything from clothing and pre-recorded prayers to the latest international movie blockbusters to antiques and exquisitely detailed tankas.

Nepal is a land of bright colors, flowers and festivals that follow Hindu, Buddhist and Tibetan traditions. Autumn is the liveliest season, when the harvest is gathered and markets and shops are crammed with excited shoppers stocking up on new clothes and festive food. Every day sees a temple or deity celebration, a wedding, or a special ceremony for everything from birth through the start of the



Religious sculptures like this are everywhere in Kathmandu.

Transportation:

Flights from Kathmandu from Shanghai, Chengdu via Lhasa, and Hong Kong. Non-stop flights from Guangzhou are reported to start soon.

Accommodation:

Good hotels average as few as US\$150 for a double room – even in peak season. Confirm your reservations before travel.

Payment:

Credit cards are rarely accepted outside major hotels. US dollar is the best known foreign currency. Exchange is difficult outside Kathmandu and Pokhara, so exchange for enough Nepalese rupees in advance.

new school term. On the banks of the river Batmati, a tributary of the Ganges, is Nepal's most important Hindu temple: Pashupatinath, the site of the burning ghats for cremations. Like India's Varanasi, it draws pilgrims year-round.

Thamel is a retail warren of small streets lined with shops and cafés, many of which with serene rooftop terraces. The Garden of Dreams, Kathmandu's 'newest' attraction, dates back to the 1920s. Newly renovated, it offers a beauti-

ful and refreshing pause at the edge of Thamel.

Patan

Patan is so close to Kathmandu as to be almost a suburb. It was constructed in the midst of four stupas that date to 200AD, but most buildings were constructed during the 16th century. Once the valley's Buddhist capital, Patan is famous for its craftsmanship. If you can tear yourself away from the palaces, shrines and temples, visit the Museum Café, a leisurely place for food and drink and a chance to check your guidebook.

Bhaktapur

Bhaktapur, a predominantly Hindu city, feels medieval even amidst its mobile phones and traffic. The Nyatapola Cafés food and drinks are good and inexpensive, but its best attraction is a bird's eye view of city architecture. Don't miss 'Potter's Square,' an area devoted to producing local terracotta pottery. Palm-size simple oil lamps, water and cooking pots, steamers for rice and more decorative items for tourists dry in the sun after being hand-shaped and fired. Bhaktapur is also famous for producing traditional Nepalese caps and for delicious 'royal' curd.

Changu Narayan, oldest of all the temples in the Bhaktapur district, dates back to 300AD. It crowns a village inhabited by skilled artists who paint traditional tankas. In addition to the magnificent sculptures and carvings, the temple offers a spectacular view over the valley below.

Outside Kathmandu Valley

Once you leave Kathmandu Valley, head for the Roof of the World (Everest) or other challenging peaks. Anything beyond a short trek should be planned well in advance. Shop around in Pokhara or on the Internet to find a trekking route that fits your time and budget. Most travellers will be satisfied with the less challenging climbs, or with tiger spotting in Chitwan's tropical jungles. Nepal provides more than its share of thrills: Pokhara's many tour agencies can arrange rafting and more. At Pokhara Airport, you can sign up on the spot for an early morning flight for a bird's-eye view of the world's largest mountains. Don't forget your camera!



From left to right: hand-made porcelain for sale, a rarely seen Western-style garden, status of elephants and dogs, and a shrine on the windy crossroad

Photos by Jane Ram

FAW-VW Audi Sales: Breathing and speaking cars



Jin Xin obtained a Master's degree in quantitative economics from Jilin University. He started his internship in the Finance Department in July 2005, and got a job offer three months later.

As a child, I had already made up my mind to work with Audi. I love Audi products not only for their design, but also for their precision manufacturing technology. My parents worked in the auto industry, so I majored in automotive engineering in university.

My first collaboration with Audi was in 1999 while I was still at university. Our school jointly organized an auto model competition with a Macao university, and as an officer of my school, I contacted Audi about becoming one of the event's sponsors. Later, when I saw the company's intern recruitment notice on its website, which I regularly visited, I immediately sent in my resume. I have a deep understanding of the Audi brand, so I was confident that they would give me a chance.

Many people believe that to do PR work, one must be handsome or beautiful, and that the job mainly involves talking to clients around a dining table. That's a misunderstanding of

what this industry is about. First, I'm not handsome. Second, I think a good PR person should have a solid college background. I studied technology, so I can do a better job of promoting the company's technological advantages compared with a person who's not familiar with the industry.

Not long ago at a China auto show, I worked for the first time with our German headquarters to arrange our German senior management's interviews with the local media. Because I lacked experience, I neglected some details, which nearly delayed the interview. There is a saying in the PR industry that "PR is no small thing," everything you neglect can lead to big trouble. My one-year work experience has developed two sides of my character. One, I've become cautious about what I say and write because the information may quickly become public. Two, I've become more proactive because organizing events and communicating with the media need enthusiasm.

Comments from Lu: Jin Xin is very reflective and creative. While many graduates are afraid to express their ideas when they first join a company, Jin, from the very beginning, gave us his honest opinion. Because of his fresh perspective, the group was encouraged to think out of the box. He made us realize that we needed to inject new things into our system. His organizational ability is also highly valued by the PR department.

When I was a university student, I'd always see the Audi A6 zip by on the streets. I fell in love with it at first sight. My interest in the car made me interested in the company. I also saw that the automotive industry was developing rapidly in China and I dreamt of becoming a part of it. So when I got the chance, I grabbed the opportunity to work at Audi without any hesitation.

Qin Chao graduated from Dongbei University of Finance and Economics majoring in business administration. Qin started her internship in July 2004 in the production department, and five months later, got a full-time job offer.



By Han Manman

Audi, the luxury arm of German auto giant Volkswagen Group, is the first global premium car brand to set up production in China. *Beijing Today* talks to three of their PR personnel about the challenges and opportunities of working for a multinational automotive company.

"FAW-VW Audi's staff search is largely concerned with a person's automotive background. We sell cars, so our staff must understand cars. It would be very difficult for us to work with people who don't have any knowledge of our products. In the auto industry, a PR person should not only have a deep understanding of cars but also an interest in the industry. Anyone who feels that the



work is boring will not do very well. Besides, the ability to understand technical language is also an important element for choosing our staff.

I hope students eventually find work that suits their skills. Some students believe what they've learned in school will be enough for work and that they have the ability to do everything well. That may be true, but sometimes it's hard for you to get what you want. You should be prepared to work from the bottom of the ladder, if needed. If you try to understand the company, its culture and learn things by heart, you might finally find your place."

— Lu Minjie, PR Director, FAW-VW Audi Sales Division



Dong Fang obtained a master's in internal combustion engineering from Dalian University of Technology. In February 2004, she began her internship at the company's PR department, and eight months later got a job offer.

is very important.

My currently job mainly involves product launching and sponsorship, including some Olympics projects, as Audi was

appointed the Official Beijing 2008 Premium Automobile. After being immersed in PR work, I realized how shallow my knowledge of this industry was at the beginning. Now, I understand that this isn't just about maintaining good relationships with the media but also promoting our brand's image.

My suggestion to seniors who are job hunting is to jump-start their career by choosing a company with a good name and long-term development plans. One or two years later, pause and take stock of what you've accomplished, then assess whether or not you want to continue down the same road.

Comments from Lu: Aside from Dong Fang's auto background, she was also the leader of her campus's art association. Her experience reflected great potential when she first joined Audi. She immediately immersed herself in her job and was quick to understand the work we gave her. During her internship, the company was planning the launch of a new product, and she gave a lot of input, which were used by the company. After having invested time and effort in the company's projects, she has now become a team leader in our department.

I still have a vivid memory of my job interview, which was held in a meeting room at my university. Five people from the Volkswagen Group interviewed me, asking me about my strongest suits, my job intentions and my career plans.

After I joined the company, I received FAW-Volkswagen's routine training for every new employee. This included safety training, knowledge of the promotion process, salary system and responsibilities of each department. We also visited the

company production line and went to First Automobile Works (FAW) for a three-month internship. Afterwards, the company arranged for us to learn German. The entire training program helped me prepare for my future responsibilities.

Comments from Lu: Qin Chao is earnest in her work and does everything with careful planning. For a person such as she, I trust that she can excel in every task that I assign her. She's now responsible for the company's Media Test-drive and Crisis Response. Her previous job was at our production

department, during which she became familiar with auto plant issues. Whenever we need to launch a new car and invite the media to have a test drive, we always ask her to handle the organization. She always does a good job and smoothly coordinates matters with the auto plant.

Follow Beijing Today

This column is open to those who want to improve their English but lack specialized native-speaker help. We will review any English articles you send to Shirley_chen@ynet.com. Suggestions

A city of tradition and modernity



CFP Photo

By Xue Hong

As a student from Tianjin, I have been traveling in Beijing for over a year, and I am deeply impressed by this expanding metropolis. It is a museum with numerous historic treasures. Meanwhile it is a booming cosmopolitan, people coming from all over the world. Beijing, a combination of traditional and modern ways of life, has different cultures thriving here harmoniously.

Having been the ancient capital of China for over 800 hundred years, Beijing has many places of interest and scenic beauty, and

has retained a lot of traditional Chinese life. Cultural relics can be easily found here and there through which you can trace China's long history. You can visit hutong, pailou or siheyuan, to see how common people led their lives in ancient China. You can also go to the Palace Museum, the Beihai Park or the Temple of Heaven, to witness the luxurious lives of the royal family. Besides these well-preserved ancient architectures, you may find traditional things just in the daily life. For traditional food, you can go to the popular Huguosi

snack bar which can be easily found. For music, you can listen to some Beijing opera played on the overpasses just near the Zoo by citizens. Culture heritage is in every corner of the city!

Maybe you will think that Beijing must be still underdeveloped since it has retained so many ancient things in the city proper, but you are not right this time. Capital of China, Beijing is also the center of economic, cultural and international activities. Every year some cultural exchanging activities and international symposiums will be held here. Foreigners are no

longer rare to see. Their foreign cultures are also becoming an important part of Beijing, making Beijing internationalized. Modern architectures as the TV tower and the Guomao Center are also a common view. Life is modernized here as in any other cosmopolitan. However there are many things beyond description. So if you'd like to travel here, welcome, to experience the unique life among tradition, civilization, modernization and globalization. Living in this great city for just over one year, I still have too much to find out. I hope you enjoy my view of Beijing.



English expert's reply

Stylistically, your first paragraph gets you off to a good start: it's concise, it's straightforward, and nicely sums up in a few sentences what you're going to talk about later in the essay. The only glaring mistake that I see is the use of "cosmopolitan" as though it were a noun. It's an adjective, so you can't have a "booming cosmopolitan"; you need "booming cosmopolitan city."

In the same sentence you've also forgotten to use a connecting preposition. You should write it like this: "Meanwhile it is a booming cosmopolitan city, with people from all over the world." Unless your sentence is made up of two independent clauses, you always need a connecting preposition between them. Other than that, your introduction is great.

Your second paragraph is full of good details, but they're a little scattered around, and there's still some mixing up of word classes. First, you've used the word *ancient* three times in this paragraph, and one thing you should always try

to do is never use a word more than once per paragraph if possible. "Ancient" is a word with several synonyms, so it's possible you could say "old China," "classical architecture," and in the case of "ancient capital of China," you can drop ancient altogether, since you mention in the same sentence that Beijing has been the capital for 800 years.

Your third paragraph is the most problematic. To me, the main problem is the lack of supporting evidence for claims of cultural diversity. Where you should have built your paragraph around citations of specific examples of Beijing's modernity and cultural offerings, you seem to have built your paragraph around categorical summaries of the different kinds of diversity and international culture in Beijing. That's driven you into writing one of the most difficult kinds of sentences to write in any language: the generalized descriptive sentence.

One of the best examples of "cultural exchanging activities

and international symposiums" is the Olympics. Hearing that Beijing is a city that holds the Olympics tells me much more vividly about Beijing's international status and diversity than hearing that it only holds cultural and international meetings.

There are also some word choice and grammar problems in the third paragraph that we should talk about. The first of them is "Capital of China, Beijing is also." This sentence is missing a conjunction or preposition in the first clause. "Capital of China" is meaningless by itself. It needs words like "While the capital of China, Beijing is also ..." or "Not only the capital of China, Beijing is also ..." to really make sense.

"Cultural exchanging activities" in the sentence after that one could be reduced to "cultural exchange activities," since "cultural exchange" is the commonly accepted name for that kind of activity. You're right in adding "-ing" if you're going to use a noun or activity name that's been

spontaneously coined in conversation as a modifier for the word "activity," but for widely known ones it's not necessary.

The closing paragraph has the same problem as the third paragraph – being too general. Closings are a difficult part of the essay to be specific in, and you do a good job when you wrap it up, naming all the things you'll find in Beijing. Let's look at how you could sharpen the first couple of lines. Using "however" to begin your first sentence is your biggest problem. This sounds like a direct translation of a Chinese sentence pattern. Though it can be used in that sense, "however" is much more commonly used the same way as "on the other hand" – to bring in a different viewpoint during an argument or debate – and if you begin a sentence with it, it sounds like you're continuing an argument you never started.

Nick Trites is an English teacher at New Channel School.

will be given on how to improve Chinglish sentences in your articles. All interesting stories are welcome. Please be sure the article is written in English, and not more than 500 words. Please do not forget to include your name and address.

Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify chinglish in public areas. If you see any chinglish signs, please take a picture and send them to Shirley_chen@ynet.com with your name and address.

Pay attention to the public health

*By Derrick Sobodash*

The first problem that jumps out when I see this sign is the extra "the." It's unnecessary. Unfortunately, this one still sounds very odd. The translation is literally spot on, but the meaning is entirely lost. Foreigners won't know what is meant by "public health," and they may find themselves scratching their heads wondering why they should be paying attention to it.

This sign is a glowing example of what's wrong with translating text literally. It really needs to be completely rewritten in a way English readers can immediately understand. I've seen these signs around town, and generally they are a kind request asking people not to spit, urinate, excrete fecal matter or leak blood in an area many others must use as well.

For the most part, foreigners already know not to do this, but to prevent them from feeling left out, a sign like "Please help keep this area sanitary for others" will suffice. If the goal is sarcasm, I heartily suggest "Please keep your bodily fluids to yourself."

The fowour of your attention: steep slope, please take care

*By Derrick Sobodash*

I must confess; I Googled 'fowour' thinking it must an archaism I've never encountered. It's not. However, 'fowour' is far from the only foul up in this translation.

The first line is the kind of flowery language that just does not translate into English. If it did, 'STOP' signs wouldn't say 'STOP,' they would say "Dearest sir, we warmly and humbly offer unto thee a piece of this one's lowly advice: cease advancing thy vehicle."

The second is quite clear, but I would remove the 'Please' and change how this is punctuated. Whoever wrote this was clearly trying to keep passersby from falling off the cliff. Show some backbone! What this sign needs is a simple, assertive command. How about, "Steep slope ahead! Keep back!" If this 'slope' is steep enough to be lethal, consider setting the sign in capital letters.



GOOSE "N" DUCK
HOLIDAY PARTIES!
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CHAO YANG
 PARK WEST
 65381691
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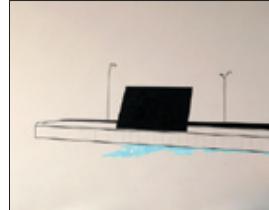
Friday, December 15

Exhibition Ling Zi Solo Exhibition



Where: Yan Huang Art Museum, No 9 Huizhong Lu (near Asian Games Village), Chaoyang
 When: Daily 9am-5pm, until December 16
 Admission: Free
 Tel: 6491 5805

Been There, Done That



Meng Jin's Anonymous Architectural and Fang Er's Zoo.
 Where: Platform China Space B, Zone A, 319-1 East End Art, Caochangdi Village, Chaoyang

When: Tue-Sun 11am-6pm, until January 6

Admission: Free
 Tel: 6432 0169

Li Shuang Solo Exhibition

Where: Linda Art Museum, Dashanzi Art District, No 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang

When: Daily 10:30am-6pm, until January 3

Admission: Free
 Tel: 8166 7933

Bachmann/Banz:

Ting Bu Dong

Paintings and installations of Caroline Bachmann and Stefan Banz.

Where: Galerie Urs Meile, No 104 Caochangdi Village, Chaoyang

When: Tue-Sun 11am-6pm, until January 27

Admission: Free
 Tel: 6433 3393

Movie

The Jimmy Hat (Xinjiekou)

Pop singer and songwriter Xue Cun not only acted in the film, but wrote the script, directed and produced it. The film is Xue's screen debut. The movie tells a story from the 1980s, when peddlers reappeared around Xinjiekou, a bus-



ting Beijing street. Xue Cun acts as an unemployed man who survives by selling little gadgets. The Jimmy Hat is a reminder of the past, featuring bell bottoms, boom boxes, and food stamps.

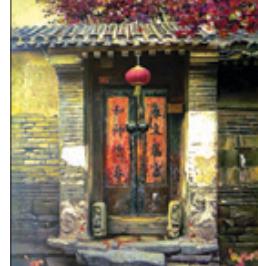
Where: Cherry Lane Movies, inside the Kent Center, Anjia Lou, Chaoyang

When: 8pm
 Admission: 50 yuan
 Tel: 139 0113 4745



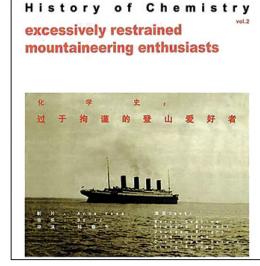
Saturday, December 16

Exhibition Feng Shaoshuai Solo Exhibition



Where: New Art Center, No 136 Nanchizi Dajie, Dongcheng
 When: Daily 9:30am-6pm, until December 22
 Admission: Free
 Tel: 6528 9103

History of Chemistry 2 – Lu Chunsheng Video Works show



Where: Platform China Space A, Platform China, Zone A, 319-1 East End Art, Caochangdi Village, Chaoyang
 When: Daily 2-4pm, until December 29

Admission: Free
 Tel: 6432 0169

From China – Group Exhibition of Red Gate's Chinese Artists

Where: Red Gate Gallery, Dongbianmen Jiaolou, Chongwen

When: Daily 10am-5pm, until December 31

Admission: Free
 Tel: 6525 1005

Outdoor Great Wall Mutianyu & Ming Tombs

Situated in Huairou county, 72km northeast of Beijing, the Mutianyu Great Wall has surprisingly remained intact throughout the centuries. Vegetation and fruit trees are

abundant, and it's not as crowded as Badaling. This three-kilometer stretch has beacon towers, watch towers and lodging houses.

Where: Meet at the Chinese Culture Club (Inside Kent Center, No 29 Anjia Lou, Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang) at 9:30am and return at around 7pm.

Cost: 350 yuan
 Tel: 6432 9341



Sunday, December 17

Exhibition Group Exhibition of International Artists



It features artists such as Christo, Alex Katz, Francis Bacon, Larry Rivers, Tapies, Li Wang, Zhang Guilin, Deng Jianjin, Lu Ping, Wang Chunmin and Qi Mengguang.
 Where: 3+3 Space,

Dashanzi Art District, No 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang

When: Daily 10am-6pm, until February 28

Admission: Free
 Tel: 6437 9942

Du Xinjian Solo Exhibition

Where: Art Scene Beijing, Dashanzi Art District, No 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang

When: Tue-Sun 11am-6pm, until January 31

Admission: Free
 Tel: 6431 6962

Movie

La Planete Blanche (The White Planet)

A film which looks at polar bears and their arctic surroundings, this features some beauti-

ful footage of Arctic wildlife – a polar bear family playing, caribou herds migrating, and some memorable underwater shots of diving guillemots.

Where: French Culture Center, 18 Guangcai International Apartment, Gongti Xi Lu, Chaoyang

When: 6pm
 Admission: 10-20 yuan
 Tel: 6553 2627

Malabar Princess

Tom, a young boy, is sent to live with his grandfather in the French Alps after his mother dies in a skiing accident. While there, he searches for the remains of the Malabar Princess, a plane which crashed

into Mont Blanc in the 1950s.

Where: French Culture Center, 18 Guangcai International Apartment, Gongti Xi Lu, Chaoyang

When: 8pm
 Admission: 10-20 yuan
 Tel: 6553 2627



Stage in January, 2007

Music

2007 Beijing New Year Concert

Who: Beijing Symphony Orchestra

Where: Zhongshan Music Hall, inside Zhongshan Park, Dongcheng

When: 7:30pm, January 1
 Admission: 80-880 yuan

Vanderbilt Symphony Orchestra

Who: Vanderbilt Symphony Orchestra (US)

Where: Great Hall of the People, on the west side of Tiananmen Square, Xicheng

When: 7:30pm, January 1
 Admission: 80-1,180 yuan

Classical Chorus

Who: SK Chorus (Germany)

Where: Beijing Concert Hall, No 1 Beixinhua Jie, Xicheng

When: 7:30pm, January 5-6

Admission: 80-680 yuan

China Symphony Orchestra 2006-2007 Season

Who: China Philharmonic Orchestra

Where: Beijing Concert Hall, No 1 Beixinhua Jie, Xicheng

When: 7:30pm, January 13

Admission: 30-280 yuan

Richard Strauss Works

Who: China Philharmonic Orchestra

Where: Poly Theater, No 14 Dongzhimen Nan Lu, Dongcheng

When: 7:30pm, January 21

Admission: 50-680 yuan

Dance

Swan Lake

Who: Russian Samara State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet

Where: Beijing Exhibition Theater, No 135 Xizhimen Wai Dajie, Xicheng

When: 7:30pm, January 1-2

Admission: 120-880 yuan

New Year Ballet Concert

Who:

National Ballet of China

Where: Beijing University Concert Hall, inside Beijing University, Haidian

When: 7:30pm, January 1-2

Admission: 150-380 yuan

Thousands-armed Guanyin

Who: China Disabled People's Performing Art Troupe

Where: Beijing Exhibition Theater, No 135 Xizhimen Wai Dajie, Xicheng

When: 7:30pm, January 24-25

Admission: 180-1,280 yuan

Little Birch Tree Dance Troupe

Who: The Little Birch Tree Dance Troupe (Russia)

Where: Poly Theater, No 14 Dongzhimen Nan Lu, Dongcheng

When: 7:30pm, January 28-31

Admission: 120-880 yuan

(By Qiu Jiaoning)